

A TIME TO SPEAK

A WEALTH OF BIBLICAL TEACHING, LESSONS, INFORMATION & TRACTS

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WHEN GOD SAYS, I DO

God's Mystery in Marriage Revealed

During the time of Jesus there were several ideas and opinions about divorce just as there are today. Jewish leaders were divided on this issue. Some believed a person could divorce for any reason. Others believed divorce had to involve fornication. It was such a controversial subject that the Pharisees decided to ask Jesus a question concerning divorce because no matter which side Jesus took, He would be on someone's wrong side.

We read in Matthew 19:3, *"The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?"* The phrase, "put away", actually means "divorce." These Pharisees were asking Jesus a trick question concerning divorce.

We know this because verse 3 tells us they came *tempting* and *testing* Him, asking if it was lawful for a man to divorce his wife for *every* cause.

Notice how Jesus answered the question about divorce. Verse 4 says, "*And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female?*" His answer to the Pharisees was a reminder that marriage was God's idea - not man's.

Jesus got to the heart of the matter concerning divorce - God's heart for marriage.

When He told them that in the beginning God made them male and female, he was referring them to God's original design for marriage. It was God who designed marriage and gave it purpose and meaning. Genesis 1:26-27 states, "*And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.*"

I believe these scriptures tell us something else about God's original design for marriage:

The complete likeness of God is found in the combination of male and female together. God said, "*Let us make man in our image,*" and then He said, "*let **them** have dominion.*" Genesis 5:1-2 says, "*This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; Male and female created he **them**; and blessed **them**, and called **their name** Adam, in the day when they were created.*"

Notice what God's divine and original idea concerning this subject of oneness in marriage was. He created the male and the female to be one being together and He called their name *Adam*. I always assumed that God created Adam, and then later on He created Eve; so first there was Adam, and then there was Eve. But It says in the day - not days - when they were created. And what God did through the creation, when He created male and female, was to create *them* in His own likeness, and He called *them* Adam. God named *them* Adam. Adam was a "*them*." Adam was not a single-sexed being; in God's eyes he was male and female. This is speaking within the context of the original union of marriage.

Now go back to Matthew 19, verses 4-6, where Jesus is answering this question concerning divorce. "*And he answered and said unto them (the Pharisees), Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain (the two) shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain (or two), but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder (or separate).*" This is saying that not only is marriage God's idea but God does the joining. Divorce is separating something God has joined, not "undoing" something we've done.

Why Did God Create Woman?

Genesis 1:31 says, *"And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day."* Then, in Genesis 2, God tells us the very first thing He noticed after creation that was not good. We're talking about a perfect paradise where no sin existed in Genesis 3. God had created all things good (Gen. 1:31), but there was one thing missing in His creation. Adam had a perfect relationship with God, he walked with Him, and apparently did not need anything. But there was one thing that was lacking in Adam's life; it's described in Genesis 2:18, *"And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him."* (Once again it's God's idea for man to have a help mate, not man's.)

All of the animal creation had a counterpart, but Adam was by himself. God saw what was lacking in Adam: he was alone and loneliness was a problem. He was alone even though he had a perfect relationship with God. Some people say, "If I had a perfect relationship with God, I would not have any other needs." While this is essentially true, as a norm God has created man to need a counterpart, a help meet, a woman.

What is a woman's purpose? It's to be a help, an aid, an assistant to the man. That is her ministry. So much talk today involves trying to make men and women independent of each other. But God created the woman to "help" or assist the man. God said the man needed a helper. In today's language and culture, being a "helper" is not associated with any significant ministry or position of importance. **However, the "role" of helper in the Bible is a vital one. It means you can accomplish something with a helper that you cannot do alone.**

An example of this helper role is found in Romans 8:26-27 where it says, *"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."* The word "helpeth" was translated from the Greek word "sunantilambanomai" meaning "to take hold of opposite together, i.e. cooperate (assist)." It's describing a **union** in which the Holy Spirit is not interceding for us but through us. The word "infirmities" is translated as weakness in five other places and is used here to describe a mental and moral weakness, not sickness. In this passage our weakness is not knowing how we should pray. We need the Spirit's "help" to pray effectively.

Marriage: A Model of God's Relationship with His People

Have you noticed that nearly everything we're seeing about the marriage relationship has a spiritual counterpart? Did you know that God actually talks about three different kinds of marriage in the scriptures? He talks about marriage between a man and a woman, our marriage to Him and our marriage to the Law.

God compares the marriage union between a man and woman to the relationship that He Himself has with us, His people. In a sense He says, "To help you understand the relationship that I'm calling you to, I'm going to give you a little scale model to show you what I'm talking about." Everything that we can say about a good marriage - one that's all God's designed it to be - is a model of what our relationship with God should be.

Oneness in Marriage

In marriage there is an exclusion of all others. The Bible says, "*they two shall be one. . .*" (Eph. 5:31). It doesn't say, "they three," "they four," or "they five." It says, "*they two shall be one flesh.*" In the same way there is an exclusion of all others in a marriage, there is to be an exclusivity in our relationship with God. He alone is our God and we alone are His people.

Concerning marriage, Genesis 2:25 says, "*And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.*" There is to be an openness and nakedness in marriage that is to be shared between a man and his wife and not shared outside of that marriage bond any other place.

Did you know that any time the Bible talks about nakedness in the scripture, it talks about it in the context of shame? In one instance, while Moses was on the mountain with God, the Children of Israel had Aaron make them an idol of gold, and they ate and played and committed adultery and fornication, to their own shame. They showed their nakedness and their shame was exposed (Ex. 32:25). There are scriptures in Isaiah that talk about nakedness in the context of shame (Isa. 20:4; 47:3). Nakedness is also mentioned in the Book of Revelation. John was instructed to write to the church in Laodicea and tell them, "You think you're in good shape, but you don't know that you're poor and you're wretched and you're naked" (Rev. 3:17). Revelation 16:15 speaks of being naked in the sense of humiliation and shame. There's only one place where nakedness is *not* spoken of in the context of shame and that's **within the relationship of marriage.**

Genesis 2:25, doesn't say the man and the *woman* were naked and were not ashamed, it says the man and his *wife* were naked unashamed. The word "ashamed" conveys the idea of guilt, condemnation and humiliation. The Bible says in Hebrews 13:4, "*Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled...*" The marriage bed, according to the Greek text, is without defilement. The phrase "without defilement" means "pure." There is a nakedness, an openness and an exposure. There is a oneness that's a oneness in body, a oneness in the emotions, a oneness of the deepest level. It's a spiritual oneness ordained by God for the marriage relationship. And it's a model of the relationship He's called us to with Him.

Notice that in 1 Corinthians 6, Paul quotes Genesis 2:24 when he's talking about a sexual union. He says in 1 Corinthians 6:16 that if you went into a harlot you'd be one body with her. Then he quotes Genesis 2:24, ". . . *for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.*" Now notice what he says in verse 17; "*But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.*" First He presents a human, earthly illustration of a physical relationship, where two people are one in body. Then he talks about a marriage union to the exclusivity of others, followed by the spiritual counterpart to that physical relationship. It's as if God were saying, "When you come into union with Me we are one to the exclusion of others. We are one in love. We are one in exposure. We are one totally." In the marriage relationship it is a oneness in *body*. When we come into union with Him we're one in spirit.

I don't have a complete understanding of all these things, but I do know this: when the physical union is being expressed in the marriage relationship, it's an ongoing expression, not something that only happens once. In the same way, our relationship with Christ needs to be an

ongoing expression. That's why the Bible says that if we've sinned, turned away, or gone a different direction, we need to come to our advocate, Jesus Christ the righteous one. If we've sinned let's expose our heart before him. Hebrews 4:13 says that *"all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."* Let's expose ourselves totally to the Lord. Let's come and intimately love Him. Do you know what happens when that occurs in your relationship with the Lord? You'll find a strength in the relationship.

In the physical relationship of marriage, there is a oneness and a closeness that brings you back together and keeps strengthening that covenant. There is a spiritual counterpart to that in our relationship with Christ and our exposure, oneness and openness to Him. You see, He wants us to be His and He wants to be ours to the exclusion of all others. That's why, if you do a word study on the word "fornication" in the Bible and you trace it back far enough, the root word of "fornication" is "idolatry." It's "idolatry" - not "adultery."

Do you know what idolatry is? Colossians 3:5 says, *"Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:"* I believe that God gave this definition of idolatry because our relationship to Him is just like a marriage relationship. When a person has been untrue in his marriage relationship, it causes the spouse to experience the deepest depths of pain. When someone has been unfaithful to the covenant - the exclusion that should have been there, the oneness in love and exposure that was not to be shared with anyone else is devastated. God says that is a small illustration of what it's like when His people are unfaithful to Him. When you do a study on idolatry, you can't escape the spiritual context of how God uses it. He says, *"Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?"* (Jas. 4:4-5). What is He saying here? He's saying that He's jealous over you. He wants you to exclusion of all others.

1 Peter 3:7 says this, *"Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them (your wives) according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered."* In this union, God has called both the male and the female to be heirs *together* of the gracious gift of life.

Have you ever taken the attitude of, "I don't care what my husband (or wife) does, I'm going to do this or that," or, "I'm going to follow God"? That's fine, but God doesn't see it that way. The way God sees it is that you're heirs *together* of the gracious gift of life. If you don't understand that principle and you try to be independent and do your own thing, your prayers will be hindered.

The counterpart to this truth is that when God has called us into union with Him, into what He even calls a marriage relationship, we become heirs together with Him of the gracious gift of life. Just as I'm not to do anything independently of my wife because of our relationship, so it is with my relationship in the Lord - I'm not to do anything independently of Him.

Married to the Law

The Bible tells me in Romans 7:1-6 that at one time I had a relationship with the law. What was that relationship with the law? Romans 7 describes it in terms of a bad marriage relationship. The Bible is referring to the spiritual counterpart of being married to the law. It says that I'm bound by the relationship of marriage until death...

What was the law? It was my marriage at one time to a really hard taskmaster. Nothing I did in my marriage pleased my husband. The law was such a perfectionist that no matter how hard I tried, and no matter what I tried to do, it was never good enough in my marriage. I was married to this critical person who never, ever lifted me up, admonished me or told me I was doing something right. All he told me were the things that I did wrong. Romans 3:20 says, ". . . *by the law is the knowledge of sin.*" I was always under a sense of guilt and condemnation when I was married to the law.

The Bible says that there was only one way that I could be free from that marriage relationship. I had to die or he had to die. Do you know what? He wouldn't die, so I died, and thus ended my "marriage relationship" to the law. How did this happen? Let's look at Romans 7:1-3, "*Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.*"

Paul is really talking about a spiritual truth here. I don't want you to fall under condemnation if you've ever been in the situation described in these verses. God does recognize marriage, he does recognize divorce and he recognizes remarriage. We can make that statement based on Deuteronomy 24:1-4, under the old covenant, which says, "*When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife. And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife; Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the LORD: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.*"

We can also say that God recognizes divorce and remarriage based on Jesus' conversation with the woman at the well. When Jesus said to her, "Go get your husband," she said, "I don't have a husband." Jesus said, "That's right. You've had five husbands, but the guy that you're with right now is not your husband. It's just a live-in relationship. He's not your husband, but I recognize every one of those previous marriages you've had. I recognize the divorces you've had. But the one that you're living with now is not your husband." She said, "I perceive that you're a prophet" (Jn. 4:16-19). God does recognize divorce and remarriage, but when He is talking about the institution of marriage, He always takes man back to the original idea - the original design - which should be a permanent relationship because it's a spiritual counterpart to our relationship with the Lord. Even though those other standards are recognized in God's eyes, He's saying, "I'm

talking about a relationship with Me, and I'm bringing it to the highest level because I want you to see it in as a spiritual counterpart to a relationship with Me."

Now let's look at Romans 7:4. It says, "*Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law. . .*" What is he talking about? He's saying that in order to break that old marriage relationship to the law there has to be a death - ". . .*by the [crucified] body of Christ.*" What does that mean? It means that I once had a union to a husband - the law but I could never please that man. All he ever did was point out my wrongdoings. That was the function of the law. Romans 3:20 says that by the law came the knowledge of sin. I really wanted to be free from that husband, but the only way I could be free was for one of us to die. Then I died and I was free. How did I die? Romans 7:4 says that I became dead to the law through the crucified body of Christ. You see, when Jesus went to the cross and I went to the cross with Him, He didn't just die for sins, but He also died to break my relationship with the law.

What was a relationship with the law like? Along with all the criticism, it never gave me a helping hand either. It's like the husband who tells his wife, "I want you to do this and I want you to do that," while he sits down and watches television. Not only does he put demands on her, but he doesn't even lift a finger to help with any of those demands.

What else happened in the marriage relationship with the law? The result of being under the law was falling under a curse. Galatians 3:10 says, ". . . *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.*" I was wretched and miserable under the law. Not only did I have a standard that was spiritual - Romans 7:12 says that the law was spiritual; holy, just, and good - but the law gave me no power to perform those things. I had to struggle in the resources of my own flesh and my own abilities to do those spiritual things that were demanded of me. I had no helping hand.

So what happened next? Verse 4 of Romans 7 says, "*Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.*" The demands really haven't changed, but I've been remarried to a wonderful husband now. And every demand that's ever been placed upon me, He Himself is the ability to fulfill that demand. Everything that was ever required of me or will ever be required of me by God, my new husband, the One who was raised from the dead so I could be married to Him, is my ability to please my heavenly Father.

Changed Names

Did you know that in a true marriage relationship the names are changed? My wife, Wendy, used to be "Sellon" and now she's "Krow." She used to have her own bank account and now she has mine. I go to work and when I get my paycheck, I don't know where it goes because it goes into her hands. God has said that the women are to guide the house. Wendy's ability to function in guiding the house, buying the groceries, driving the car and putting gas in really comes through my ability. She's doing what God has called her to do through my resources and strength, when she signs my name on those checks because we're no longer two, we're one.

We're no longer separate entities going separate ways, but we are one and the expression of our oneness is found in our children. Our son has some of me in him, but he also has some of her. He looks like me, and he looks like her. He has my qualities in him, but he also has her qualities. We've born fruit from our union of oneness.

What does the Bible say here in Romans 7:4? It says that we're dead to the law. We're married to a new husband, Jesus Christ Himself, that we should bear fruit unto God. There's going to be an expression of bearing fruit unto God. There's going to be an expression of Christ on this earth. But it's not me alone, and it's not Jesus Christ by Himself in spirit form walking upon the earth. He uses me as a vessel and we're in union together. The Bible says we are co-laborers together with Him (1 Cor. 3:9). We're bearing fruit unto God and it's an expression of something that's sweet and something that's pleasing in the Father's eyes. I'm married to another so I should bring forth fruit unto God. Under the law I had no ability to bring forth fruit. I was impotent, so to speak, under the law, because my strength was limited by my own ability to do things.

Do you know what the real root of sin is? It's independence. It's being self-sufficient. It's self. The original temptation in Genesis was not to be like the devil, it was to be like God. The temptation was to eat of the tree and be like God. Didn't God say tell us to be like Him? The trouble is, God doesn't want us to be like Him independently of Him. I'm in a marriage relationship, and the only way that I can be like Him is by being joined in this union of divine oneness. Now I've taken on His name - "**Christian.**" I've become one in spirit, according to 1 Corinthians 6:17. "***But he that is joined unto the Lord is*** [not become one in flesh, but] *one spirit.*" My spirit and God's spirit have been united into one through Jesus Christ. The fruit I bear has to be produced through His strength and ability.

First Ruling Principle in Marriage: Joining

There are two ruling principles in this marriage relationship between me and Christ. These same principles exist in my physical marriage on this earth as well. The first principle is that marriage in scripture means a joining, a oneness, a uniting, "What God has joined together, let no man put asunder" (Mt. 19:6). "The two shall become one flesh" (Eph. 5:31). "The two shall cleave and become one flesh" (Mt. 19:5). What does the word "cleave" mean? In Hebrew it means "to stick to; to adhere to." It also means "to pursue." The command was given to the man to pursue, cleave and stick to like glue. Why? Because man is the lover in this relationship and woman is the responder. The woman will respond to the way the man loves. Submission is not blind obedience. Submission is won through the love of the man, just as Jesus became the head of the church and gave Himself for the church, and won the right to have our submission.

If I love my wife, I'll give her tokens of my affection and love. They may be gifts or flowers, or ways of meeting her needs by giving her spending money, providing for her, giving her the security of a home, or expressions of affection that are not necessarily of a sexual nature. Women just need affection. When I do that for my wife, she doesn't get upset with me and say, "I want a divorce." You know why? My wife doesn't want a divorce when I provide for her, give her security and affection, verbally express my love for her and all of these things. She wants to respond in kind to those acts of love. God made her as a woman to be a responder. God says that

this kind of relationship where one responds to acts of love is just a model of His real, eternal relationship with us as responders!

Do you know what I think eternity will be? Eternity will be an endless unfolding of divine love. I believe that the relationship I have right now with the Lord is truly an engagement relationship. In the New Testament, when Mary and Joseph were espoused, it meant that in the eyes of the law they were married, even though it was not consummated. The engagement period was called marriage, and it took a divorce even to break an engagement. Paul said to the church, "I want to present you as a pure virgin unto Christ (2 Cor. 11:2), wholly and exclusively unto Him." This marriage relationship is going to be consummated, at the marriage supper of the Lamb, I suppose, and all throughout eternity there's going to be an unfolding of love. God designed a little, physical, scale model here on earth with the man as the lover and the woman as the responder. And just as she'll respond back with love if she's given love, God has said, "I want you to know that you loved Me because I first loved you." (1 Jn. 4:19) The Bible doesn't say that we just started loving God on our own. The Bible says that we love Him because He first loved us. In Ezekiel 16:8 God says, *"Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine."* He gave us a picture of marriage in this verse, but He likened it to bringing us unto our relationship with Him.

So this is the first principle in marriage: anywhere in scripture that it talks about marriage, it's talking about joining together as one. But marriage is more than that. If a man went into a prostitute, the Bible says he'd become one body with her, but that doesn't mean he's married to her. He would be sinning against this principle of marriage. He'd be sinning against his mate or future mate, and also against the design and definition of marriage. Marriage is a joining together in the fullest sense - in a sense of spirit to spirit, soul to soul, and body to body - especially for a believer. That's why God says, *"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"* (2 Cor. 6:14). In a Christian marriage, you have the potential of bringing Christ not only into the marriage but into the union of spirit to spirit, soul to soul, and body to body. That's why it's so powerful for Christian couples in this relationship. The Bible says that if I go out and join myself to a harlot, I actually join Christ to the harlot because I've become a member of Christ's body (2 Cor. 6:15). However, if I consider this same dynamic in a positive light, in my marriage relationship I'm bringing Christ, and inviting Christ, and joining Christ into my union and into my marriage. That potential is the strongest potential in the world!

Joining Involves a Covenant

Marriage is more than just a joining together, because its joining together involves a *covenant*. Sexual intercourse is not marriage. Sexual intercourse is a consummation of marriage, and marriage is a joining together and becoming one in the fullest possible way, but it's only done in covenant. The Hebrew word for this covenant is BERIYTH (ber-eeth) and it's the most binding contract that is possible. It's even used with the shedding of blood or cutting an animal into pieces. It involves blood. It involves the two becoming one. The closest concept we have is

two becoming blood brothers and marriage is it. It's becoming one under a covenant and a vow. It's the vow and the covenant that keep me moving in the area of love toward my wife.

Love is Not a Feeling

The Bible never teaches you to love only when you feel like loving. The problem is that we don't feel like it often enough. The world isn't full of love, is it? The Bible doesn't say to feel like loving and then love. The Bible commands me to love and my feelings will follow. Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church - that's the commandment (Eph. 5:25).

If I thought that love was just a feeling or an emotion I might say, "I want to be with you because I feel good when I'm with you." What if that was my only concept of love? It is a form of love, but it's not the kind of love that God commands us to have. God says, "I'm telling you to love your enemies. Bless those that curse you, do good to those that hate you, pray for those that despitefully use you" (Mt. 5:44).

If I thought love was just a warm feeling I'd be saying, "God, do you mean I have to have a warm feeling of love and affection for somebody who slaps me in the face, persecutes me, hates me, and slanders me? That's impossible." But the Bible didn't say to love when you *feel* love.

Let's say two singles want to be united in matrimony. We ask the man, "Do you solemnly promise and vow that you will love this woman, you'll take her as your wife, cherish her and honor her?" And the man vows, "Yes, I do." Then she says her vows. So we pronounce them man and wife and they go on their way. Suppose a few years later, or maybe after only one year, they come back and they're having problems in their marriage. She says, "He doesn't love me. He doesn't show me any affection or kindness. He just doesn't love me." We ask him, "Is this true?" And he replies, "Yeah, that's right." Why does this happen?

I used to think that if I taught my children enough Bible verses, when they got older they would "not depart from the Lord" and everything would be fine. Then one day I discovered that it wasn't going to be some Bible verse that I made my son memorize that would carry him through life. It's those things he experiences in my home that he's going to take out into his life. I know because what I experienced in my home is what I took out into my life.

If you come from a dysfunctional home and you've never seen love or you've never seen expressions of kindness and affection, if you never heard your father or mother ever say, "I love you" to each other, then it won't matter if you come to marriage and vow to love your spouse for the rest of your life. If you've never seen your parents hug or kiss, or you never saw your father give a gift to your mother just because he wanted to, you have no concept of what I'm talking about. You have no concept at all about what I mean by love or how to be loving to someone. Even if you vow to do it, in just a matter of months your marriage will break down and start falling to pieces. You see, my son is going to take out of my home what he's seen in my home, what he's felt in my home and what he's experienced in my home. If he never experienced it, then he can't take it with him.

Second Ruling Principle in Marriage: Love

We've seen the principle of marriage that is a uniting together which first involves a covenant. This small scale model of the relationship here on earth between a husband and wife is the same kind of relationship that is to be found eternally in the heavens. It's a joining, an unfolding of a love for all eternity. And it's a joining process of God's covenant to be one with me forever. He says, "This is the covenant that I'll make with you - your sin and iniquity I'll remember no more. I'll put myself on the inside of you, I'll be merciful to you in your unrighteousness, and your sin and iniquity I'll remember no more. I'll be your God and you will be My people. I swear to you, this is what I will do" (Heb. 8:10, 12).

A covenant is a binding and solemn promise, agreement or vow. It's binding because God is not a man that He should lie (Num. 23:19). I can violate all of these principles of oneness that God is trying to show me about Himself. I can violate them on earth but I'm talking about something that He is trying to get across to me in an eternal way. Marriage is a joining and a oneness that involves a covenant. That covenant is a covenant with the ruling principle of love. It's a covenant of love, because love is the ruling principle of this covenant. What's the ruling principle of my covenant with this woman in marriage? It's love. What is the ruling principle of her submission to me? It's love. What's the ruling principle of me providing for her, nourishing her, and cherishing her as my own body? It's the principle of love.

The Bible says, "*For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church ... This is a great mystery (the relationship of marriage): but I speak concerning Christ and the church*" (Eph. 5:29, 32). Have you ever thought about that? No man ever hated his own flesh. I used to think people who had poor self images and committed suicide did, but the Bible says that no man ever hated his own flesh. He nourishes and cherishes it even as Christ cherished the church. Husbands are to love their wives in the same way.

Do you know what that phrase, "nourished and cherished" means? Let's say it's getting chilly in the room you're sitting in now. You'll probably put a jacket on, and when you do you'll nourish your body. You don't just say, "I love being cold. I'm going to go outside and stand in the snow because it feels so good." In a few hours you are most likely going to nourish and cherish your body with a meal because it's the natural thing to do. You're not going to starve yourself. Do you know that's the kind of love God called me to in my marriage relationship? I'll be saying, "Are you cold, Honey? Here's your coat. Do you need food? Here it is."

While it's natural for me to nourish and cherish my body, it's not natural for me to nourish and cherish my wife. Why? Because the principle of sin came into the first marriage. It didn't come into the first church, it came into the first marriage. In Genesis 3, when sin entered into creation and into the marriage, all of a sudden what was natural was no longer natural. Why? Because the root of sin in my life caused me to go astray and turn to my own way. "*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way. . .*" (Isa. 53:6). So now I'm independent. Now I want to do things my way.

You see, it's not natural to love. Someone might disagree, "I beg your pardon," they'll say, "I want to be with her. I just want to be around her." Well, wait until they've been married for a little while, because there's this principle of sin that causes independence in people; they want to go their own way and do their own thing. They don't care if they hurt someone else. There's

some type of dysfunction in every family like this. Perhaps you never saw affection, or expressions of kindness and love in your home. There's only one way to love with that kind of love because it's not natural; **it has to be learned**. It's going to have to come from God's Word.

What is Love?

First John 5:3 says, "*For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. . .*" Second John 6 says, "*And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. . .*" If I were to ask someone to describe love he might say, "Love is a warm feeling, it's tender affection, it gives me goose bumps." But God says, 'Brothers and Sisters, *this* is love. You live and you walk in My principles and My commandments." Then you have to learn the principles. Romans 13 says those principles of love will never harm anyone - "*for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law*" (Rom. 13:8). Therefore love is a fulfilling of the law. When you walk in these principles, you'll be walking in love. Love is kind - that means generous, that means giving, that means being unselfish, that means seeking the best for someone else. God says, "This is love. Walk after these principles."

Someone might say, "I've never seen it in my home. I don't know what God's talking about." Well, I'll show it to you right here. Matthew 7:12 says, "*Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them. . .*" Here it is in written form. When Jesus said, "It is written," in the Greek it meant, "Say it again." God's telling us, "I'm saying it to you again. And this is what I'm saying, **Whatever you want someone to do for you, that's what you do for them.**"

Why can't we love? Because we're caught in this principle of sin, and this principle of sin is selfish. It's someone sitting there saying, "They don't love me. If they love me why don't they come over here and visit me? Don't they know I'm hurting? Why don't they come over here and pray for me? They're a bunch of hypocrites down at that church. Why don't they do something? Don't they know I'm hurting? I'm hurting so bad, why doesn't anybody care?"

What has God said? God said, "This is the way it works. Get up out of your pity party and think about what you would want done to you. Would you want someone to be kind to you? Would you want someone to give a gift to you? Would you want someone to be loving and say kind words to you - not jokes that put you down, but words that say, "This is what I like about you?"

Put those principles into action, and do you know what will happen? The love you've been desiring will be generated in those people you've been ministering to, and it will come back to you in good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over (Lk. 6:38). To have friends, you have to be friendly (Prov. 18:24). To have love, you have to give love. God so loved He gave (Jn. 3:16). Love is a verb. Love is an action word. Love can only be seen by what it does, not by the words that are said. First John 3:18 says, ". . . *let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.*" It's good to say that I love you. But if I say, "I love you" yet do things opposite of love in deed, then I'm lying. Love is an action, it has to be seen. There never come a time in my marriage when I say to my son, "Now Steven, you're 16 years old now, and I

want you to know that I love your mother, Wendy." He already knows whether or not I love his mother because love is an action. It's the example he sees in my home.

Love Can be Taught

Titus 2:4-5 (NIV) says, *"Then they can train (or teach) the younger women to love their husbands ... to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind..."* This says that love is not a feeling, but it's a principle to be taught by the older women to the younger women in the church. Love is something that's taught.

Even though you've been given these principles, do you know what it's going to take to be able to walk in them? It's going to take getting down on your knees and saying, "Hey God, I can't do it in my own strength or ability." It goes against the grain of my flesh to honor someone else above myself. It goes against the grain of my flesh to give to another person rather than meeting my own selfish needs. It takes God, who is the source of love, the author of love, and the One who's saying, "Brothers, I wrote it down because I wanted to show you that if you're walking in these principles you're on the right path. Keep looking to Me; I'll give you divine ideas. I'll give you creative ideas on how to love others, how to be in love, and how to stay in love, even when you don't feel like it."

Jesus didn't feel like it when He went to the cross. He said, "God, I don't want to do this. Nevertheless not my will, but Yours be done" (Lk. 22:42). Romans 5:8 (NIV) says, *"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* He demonstrated love. The love that He demonstrated in going to the cross even went against His feelings. He didn't feel like it. But He chose to operate in the principles of divine love that God gave in the scriptures. He gave Himself without feeling like it, and as He gave, many of us have given back to Him the feeling of love and appreciation. We generated that love back to Christ when He took a step to love us without feelings.

It can happen in your marriage too. You can rekindle the flame of love. It can happen in your friendships. It can happen in your job situation. It can happen if you make it your goal. You make operating in the principles of divine love the most important thing in your life. The next time you come to a decision, just stop and think, "Am I making this decision based on selfishness and what I want, or am I considering others in this decision?" As you continue loving this way, you'll find that the love you've been desiring will be multiplied back to you. Your life will become a demonstration of God's love to the world.

AGAPE LOVE

There is much confusion today on the subject of love because we are limited to only one English word (love) with a broad range of meanings. For example, if I said, "I love my wife, I love my dog, I love apple pie," obviously I am not talking about love in the same degree or definition.

In the New Testament period there were four major Greek words that were used.

Eros - A word that was not actually used in the New Testament but was alluded to. It meant sexual passion; arousal, its gratification and fulfillment. The Greek word is probably not used in the New Testament because the origin of the word came from the mythical god Eros, the god of love. It is inferred in many scriptures and is the only kind of love that God restricts to a one-man, one-woman relationship within the bounds of marriage (Heb. 13:4; Song 1:13; 4:5-6; 7:7-9; 8:10; 1 Cor. 7:25; Eph. 5:31).

Storge - Storge is the natural bond between mother and infant, father, children, and kin. William Barclay states, "We cannot help loving our kith and kin; blood is thicker than water" (N.T. Words, 1974).

Phileo - Phileo love is a love of the affections. It is delighting to be in the presence of another, a warm feeling that comes and goes with intensity. The Bible encourages it but it is never a direct command. God never commands phileo since this type of love is based on the feelings. God Himself did not phileo the world but rather operated in agape love towards us. I cannot have a warm tender feeling toward an enemy but I can agape love them.

Agape - Agape love is God's kind of love. It is seeking the welfare and betterment of another regardless of how we feel. Agape does not have the primary meaning of feelings or affection. Jesus displayed it when he went to the cross and died for you and me regardless of how He felt. In the gospels Jesus prayed, "...Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Mt. 26:39; Mk. 14:36; Lk. 22:41-43; Jn. 18:11). Jesus sought the betterment of you and me, regardless of His feelings. Matthew 7:12 states it this way, "So whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them; for this is the law and the prophets" (RSV).

We can agape our enemies regardless of how we feel. If they are hungry, we can feed them; if they thirst we can give them a drink (Rom. 12:20-21). We can choose to seek the betterment and welfare of others regardless of how we feel.

Jesus was the greatest expression of love that ever came into the world, but it is never recorded that he ever said the words, "I love you!" Why? because 95 percent of all love is non-verbal. Jesus did not love with just words but in deed and truth (1 Jn. 3:18). If your actions contradict your words, what are people going to believe, your words or your actions? Your actions of course. Vine's Expository Dictionary states, "Love can be known only from the actions it prompts" (p. 21).

The following is a description of agape love, also called "charity" in the New Testament (1 Cor. 13). This paraphrase is based upon research of the Greek and English words and their meanings in 1 Cor. 13:4-8.

LOVE SUFFERETH LONG. God's love has a tolerance for and endures trying situations and persons beyond an average standard. God's love is patient.

LOVE IS KIND. God's love is of a friendly nature, generous, hospitable, warm-hearted, and good. God's love is charitable and helpful, showing sympathy and understanding for others. It is

considerate, forbearing, tolerant, courteous, and thoughtful, desiring only to promote another's welfare. It is generous, liberal, and beneficial, demonstrating itself in kindly acts.

LOVE ENVIETH NOT. God's love does not resent another's good fortune or desire to have what is his. God's love is not jealous and does not deprive another of what he has.

LOVE VAUNTETH NOT ITSELF. God's love does not boast and brag or abound with self-praise. It is not vain nor proud.

LOVE IS NOT PUFFED UP. God's love is not high-minded or puffed up with pride.

LOVE DOTHT NOT BEHAVE ITSELF UNSEEMLY. God's love does not act, react, function, or perform in a manner which is in bad taste, improper, or in violation of what is right.

LOVE SEEKETH NOT HER OWN. God's love does not demand its own way.

LOVE IS NOT EASILY PROVOKED. God's love is not easily annoyed or incited to anger or resentment.

LOVE THINKETH NO EVIL. God's love does not reason about or reflect upon that which causes or constitutes misfortune, suffering, difficulty, or the like. God's love does not ponder upon wickedness.

LOVE REJOICETH NOT IN INIQUITY. God's love feels joyful when right, sincerity, integrity, honesty, and truth prevail.

LOVE BEARETH ALL THINGS. God's love makes it possible to withstand all stress and difficulty. Because God is love, He supports and carries on His own Person whatever is placed upon Him. God's love protects, covers, and keeps off anything which threatens the benefit and welfare of another. God's love holds back, refrains, and is tolerant and patient in all circumstances.

LOVE BELIEVETH ALL THINGS. God's love puts faith in others, believing the best of everyone (without criticizing or looking for fault).

LOVE HOPETH ALL THINGS. God's love persists in hoping, against all odds, in confidence and expectation of fulfillment of that which is promised.

LOVE ENDURETH ALL THINGS. God's love causes one to carry on through, despite hardships.

LOVE NEVER FAILETH. God's love never proves insufficient in duration or is unsuccessful in effectiveness. Love will never disappoint or prove undependable. God's love goes on forever and will never come to an end.

Are you walking in love and trusting the Holy Spirit's power for the manifestation of this virtue? (Gal. 5:22)

Sin is the transgression of the principles of love. Always let love be your highest aim and your greatest pursuit (1 Cor. 14:1).

PUTTING MORE LIFE INTO YOUR MARRIAGE

One unique thing I've discovered about the Bible is that it records the failures along with the successes of God's people. We'll be reading about a Bible character who sounds like a great person, and then if we read long enough, we find out he wasn't so great after all. He was human and sometimes failed.

Noah was a great man, but he got off the ark and got drunk. Jacob was called a swindler, but God made him Israel and made a great nation out of him. Abraham was a great man of faith, but he was a failure in many things. Moses murdered an Egyptian; but God redeemed his failure and brought success out of it. David was a man after God's own heart; but he once murdered and committed adultery.

We're no different than the men and women of the Bible. We've all sinned. Many of us have failed in our past. Some of us have failed in our marriages. Perhaps your marriage is in trouble or you've already been divorced. I want to tell you that you can be forgiven. You don't have to live with your past failures.

This is illustrated in 1 Corinthians 6:9, "Don't you know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God." Notice what he says in verse 11 "And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."

Leaving the Past Behind

If you want a good, successful marriage today, you must make a complete break from the past and its memories. You have to do what the Apostle Paul did, "Forgetting those things which are behind and pressing towards the mark of the high calling in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13).

Maybe in your younger years you sowed your wild oats and did a lot of things you shouldn't have done such as adultery, fornication or homosexuality. But if you've repented, Jesus has washed you whiter than snow. The word says in Romans 6:6, "Knowing this the old self was crucified."

When I repent, not only am I washed from my past, but the old person has been laid in the grave. My wife isn't married to that man of the past. She's married to a new creature in Christ.

If your marriage is going to be successful, you have to establish this in your heart and quit living in the past. Forget those things which are behind and press on towards the mark of the high calling of God. He called you and He still has a plan for your life.

You Need Each Other

Let's look at what the Bible has to say about marriage starting with the beginning in Genesis 1:31, "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day." Everything up to this point was good. This was before the fall, so everything was in a perfect state, in a perfect relationship with God. However, in Genesis 2:18, God pointed out the first thing that wasn't good. "And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him."

Some Christians have the idea that they don't need anyone or anything but Jesus. Wives, you may think that it doesn't matter what your husband thinks - it's just you and Jesus. Husbands, you may feel that a relationship with Jesus is all you need. It doesn't matter what your wife thinks. If you believe this way, you're in error. The world may tell you that you can each do your own thing, but that's wrong. God's original idea was and is for a wife to support her husband, to help him, to complete him.

The Bible says, in 1 Peter 3:7, that we're heirs together of the grace of life. I'm a joint heir with my wife. I'm not a single unit. God made man with a need for a counterpart. It's explained in Genesis 5:1-2, "This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created." God called Adam and Eve together as one unit. The male and female together constitute the complete image of God. Within the woman there is an image of God and within the man there is an image of God, but when you put the man and woman together, you have a complete expression of the image of God.

I believe the Bible refers to God in the masculine gender. However, God also has feminine characteristics. One of God's names is "El Shadai," which means the breasted one that cares for a nursing child. Tenderness and kindness are also attributes of God's character.

What is really important to God? Relationship, first with God in the new birth experience and our daily walk, then with others. This is particularly true of the marriage relationship. God could have created man to relate only with Him. Instead, He chose to relate to man in a triune relationship - God, man and woman. God wanted to teach man to walk in relationship, so much so that He related to Adam and Eve as being one unit together.

In the New Testament, our relationship with God is still affected by our relationship with our wives. In 1 Peter 3:7 it says "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge,

giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered." If we fail to dwell, or abide, with our wives in understanding, our prayers will be hindered. In the Greek, the word "hindered" means to "cut off." Our prayers will be cut off if we fail to understand the woman God has given us and dwell with her according to knowledge.

Sin Came into Marriage First

An important point is that sin didn't come into the church first; sin came into marriage first. Sometimes we put our priority on the church; but the church will be no stronger than the family units within it. If you have marital problems you will bring them into the church. There is nothing wrong with marriage, but marriage problems reveal problems in people. You won't have a good marriage without change. When you buy an appliance and something is wrong with it, you get out the manual for the solution. God designed marriage and God gave us the manual, the Bible, and it will tell us what's wrong and what to do about it. 1 John 5:3 says "this is the love of God that we keep his commandments," or walk in his ways. God tells me how to treat my wife. He tells me the attitude I should have in my relationship with her.

Marriage Is God's Idea

God chose to create a woman for Adam. He could have created ten friends for him, but instead he chose a woman. In Genesis 2:20-21, we read exactly how God created her. "And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;"

Surgery has only come about in the last few hundred years, but God did surgery thousands of years ago. Verse 22 says, "And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man."

As I think about this, I can see Adam waking up and thinking "Ouch, this is sore" until he sees what God has made.

Notice that it says the Lord brought her unto the man. Many single people ask me how to find a mate. I usually tell them, "You don't have to go out and play the dating game. The best thing you can do is to seek God with all your heart. Marriage is God's idea so you don't need to go out shopping. God will bring her to you."

Leaving and Cleaving

In verse 23 we see a scripture we often use. "And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Adam wasn't kidding. He knew that she was made from his flesh. This is what God does in a marriage relationship. That oneness is described in verse 24. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." Marriage begins with leaving the closest relationship you've ever known in life. When you're single, there is no closer relationship than the kind you have with your mom and dad. In marriage, God calls you to refocus your life upon another and come into a relationship that is more intimate and dear than a relationship with a mother and father.

Husbands, there are many ways that we fail to leave. When we consume ourselves with TV and a job and other things, we fail to refocus our life on our wives. The Bible says I'm to be the husband of one wife. Does that mean there is to be one and none other? I don't think so, because the Bible says if my partner dies I'm free to remarry. I think when it says the husband of one wife it means all of my attention is to be focused on my marriage partner. If you're still hanging onto your relatives and it causes problems in your marriage, you have failed to leave.

After leaving, this verse says a man should cleave unto his wife. The word "cleave" actually means to glue, adhere to or stick to. If you take two pieces of paper and glue them together and let them dry, it's impossible to separate the two pieces of paper. If you try to separate them, they will tear. That is why God hates divorce, because you are not leaving two whole people anymore. You are leaving two fragments of what was supposed to be one.

The word cleave in this verse is in a present tense verb form. You don't cleave one time; you continue to cleave. Anything that divides me from my wife is a failure to cleave. If I speak unkind words or criticize my wife, I'm failing to cleave. If I speak words of kindness, love and edification to my wife, I'm cleaving because it brings us closer.

Sex, Christ and the Church

The last part of verse 24 says "And they shall be one flesh." It is saying that the sexual union will make you one flesh. The next verse says "And they were both naked, the man and his wife and they were not ashamed." I did some research in the scriptures on nakedness and every reference had to do with shame, except for the marriage relationship. In the marriage relationship there is no shame. Hebrews 13 says "Marriage is honorable and the bed is undefiled, but the whoremongers and adulterers, God will judge." Marriage is a oneness or a nakedness that God approves. It's really a counterpart of the relationship with Christ and the church.

Everything in marriage has a counterpart in the spirit. In Ephesians 5 it speaks of a man being joined in one flesh to his wife. In verse 32 it says "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church." A good marriage is a small-scale model of an eternal truth. The counterpart to a kiss when you compare marriage to the relationship between Christ and the Church is praise or worship. If you look up the Greek word for worship, the root word is kiss. What is the counterpart for intercourse? 1 Corinthians 6:15 says, "Know ye not that your bodies

are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh." Regardless of what the world says, physical intercourse outside of marriage is not love. God calls it fornication or adultery. He calls it the pleasure of sin for a moment, but the result is destruction. When intercourse is misused outside of marriage, you are actually damaging the oneness that God created for your marriage.

Sexual intercourse is a sacred relationship. It is 20 percent technique, and 80 percent letting the woman know she is loved. It's impossible to have a good physical relationship if that woman doesn't know she is loved. It is only then that she can give herself away.

The spiritual counterpart to this relationship is in verse 17. It says "But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." He said in the physical union you become one body, but in the spiritual union with God you become one spirit.

I believe what is said goes beyond even this, that I can't be one spirit or one heart with God when I have other junk in there. Human beings are susceptible to adultery. God says the real unfaithfulness is when my people go astray from me. That is spiritual fornication. James 4:4 says "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." The real adultery is not the physical part. As we go astray, we put other gods in our heart. That's why every day it's important for us to turn to God. Every day he shows us how to love as He loves.

True Submission is Based on What the Man Does

In Ephesians 5:22, we find every woman's favorite verse. "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord." Notice that it didn't say obey your husbands, it said submit to your husbands. A woman could obey her husband and never submit to him. The word submit is based on what the man does. The next verse says "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body." The husband takes his headship by love, just as Christ takes his headship by being the savior of the body. The savior of the body means the provider, the protector, the preserver. As a husband protects, cares for and loves his wife, the natural response for her is to submit. God made woman a responder. He told the man to take the initiative in the marriage relationship. The initiative for husbands is to love your wives.

There is no place in the New Testament that God commanded the women to love their husbands. I know that women are supposed to love their husbands. There is a place in Titus that says the older women are to teach the younger women to love their husbands. However, God gives a command for men to love their wives. As you express love to your wife, she will "do her part" which is to respond to love.

Loving With Words

Verse 25 says, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." I used to read this verse and get under condemnation. I thought the Lord could never come for His church because it's in such a mess. God showed me what this truth means in a marriage relationship. Christ loved the church and sanctified the church and cleansed the church by his words.

In the Greek, it's *rhema*, the spoken words of God. Those spoken words of God to the church are "I've loved you, I've laid down my life for you, I've set you apart, you are mine, I cleanse you." He cleansed you as he said, church, I forgive you. Now, husbands love your wives the same way Jesus loved, through His words.

How do I sanctify my wife? I set my wife apart and tell her she is the most wonderful thing that ever happened to me. I speak kindness to her. I express love to her with my words and cleanse her by my words. My words edify her. She may say "I want to be a good wife." You say, "I know you do, you fail just like I do. I forgive you." Love your wives always speaking edification and kindness. If you find it necessary to criticize, you first tell her how you have failed and missed it.

Loving Our Wives As We Love Ourselves

Verse 28 says "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself." This is not a love of passion. He says love your wives as your own body. I care for my body. When my body is hungry, I give it something to eat. When my body is sleepy, I let it sleep. If I have a physical infirmity, I cover it up. If your wife has a weakness, don't expose it in front of other people.

Notice in verse 29, "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:" The word "cherish" means to hold her dear, value her highly, treat her tenderly, take good care of her, nurture her, cling to her. It means to hold her valuable in your eyes. He says for the husband to nourish his wife. He is to feed her, to sustain her with the substances necessary for life and growth. God told the male to do what the female does to an infant baby. When the woman breastfeeds the baby, she holds it and nourishes it with substance for life. Men if you will do this, your wife will be glad to meet all of your needs.

Marriage: A Box of Goodies

Marriage can be compared to a box that is full of all kinds of goodies. Whatever you want is in this box of marriage. You can have all the love you'll ever need. In this box is talking, sharing, doing fun things together, freedom to share your feelings, loyalty, romance, affection, intimacy,

warmth, touching, sex, friendship, affirmation, communication and oneness. The possibilities go on and on.

There is one rule. If you want to take something out of the box, you have to put it in first. If you put in affection and your mate puts in affection, you can draw from it anytime. Some people may say "there is no love in my marriage." There is not supposed to be any love in marriage. Love is in people. If you want love, you have to put love in the box called marriage. If you want friendship, you have to set aside time for your mate. If you want transparency you have to reveal yourself.

One thing God wants in a marriage is loyalty in action, attitude and thought. Matthew 15 says that out of the heart proceeds adultery, fornication and other bad things. This is referring to the mind. God has called us to be loyal in our thought life as well as in action. If Satan puts a thought in your mind and he sees that it brings you a little pleasure, he will keep bringing it back. You may not resist because it is pleasurable. If the devil has to wait 25 years to set you up to be unfaithful, he will. You need to bring all your thoughts into obedience to Jesus.

You may put a lot of good things into your marriage box. Sometimes it only takes one negative thing to kill the love. If you put in criticism, you'll kill the love. Women need nonsexual touching and warmth. When it doesn't happen, there is an unmet need. Someone else may come along who will meet that need.

Men are more sexual. If a woman withholds sex in an effort to bribe her husband to do something, it leaves an unmet need that opens the door to the devil. Someone else may come along to meet that need.

You may be from a dysfunctional family. Maybe you never saw love demonstrated between your mother and father. You may want to love your wife, but you don't know how. There is no way that someone can love unless they've seen love and known love. I've realized that the greatest thing I can do for my children is to love my wife. They will carry forever what they sense in our home. If you come from a dysfunctional home, there is hope and it's found in the Bible. 1 John 3 says love is to lay down your life for a brother. Husbands, lay down your life to meet your wife's needs. Wives, lay down your life to meet your husband's needs.

Conclusion

I would also encourage you to read books about marriage that agree with the principles in God's word, the Bible. Most of the books on marriage are read only by women. God works through information so you should read everything you can and ask God to help you implement these things into your life. Find out what each other's needs are. Marriage is wonderful and I can personally testify that it can more and more exciting as the years go by.

Recommended Resources For Marriages - Booklets and Books

"When God Says I Do (God's Mystery in Marriage Revealed)" by Don Krow.
(This booklet may be downloaded from our website here:
<https://delessons.org/tools/gods-mystery-in-marriage-revealed/>)

"Love Life for Every Married Couple" by Ed Wheat, M.D.; Zondervan. (This book tells how to fall in love, stay in love, and rekindle your love. A good book on marriage.)

"His Needs, Her Needs" by Willard F. Harley Jr.; Revell. (Many couples experience the agonizing pain of infidelity. This book identifies the ten most important marital needs of husbands and wives. It will help teach you how to fulfill each other's needs and affair-proof your marriage.)

"The Friendship Factor" by Alan Loy McGinnis; Augsburg Publishing House. (A book that relates how to get closer to people you care for.)

"How to Win Friends and Influence People" by Dale Carnegie. (A secular writer, but practical book on relating to others.)

"The Bondage Breaker" by Dr. Neil Anderson; Harvest House Publishers. (Although this book is not on the subject of marriage, it is most helpful for anyone seeking deliverance from spiritual bondage. Practical steps to take to walk in freedom.)

Cassette Tapes

Bible Believers Cassettes, Inc. Loan Library. (A cassette lending library offering over 1,000 cassettes on the subject of marriage and relationships.) Call or write: 130 Spring Street, Springdale, Arkansas 72764 USA; (501) 756-1100.

THE EXCHANGED LIFE

OVERCOMING THE POWER OF SIN

In this booklet, I will deal with the problem of sin and the effects it has upon the human body. Not only does sin affect the body, but it affects the soul. I want to teach you how to defeat sin in your life. A lot of Christian theology states that we have to resist sin, so consequently, we spend

our lifetime trying to resist it. Some people think that they have to overcome sin, so they spend all of their life trying to overcome it. The more they try to overcome, the more defeated they are in their Christian life. They don't know what is wrong. They think that they should be able to overcome, but the Word of God never teaches that it is our responsibility to overcome sin. What the word of God does tell us in the sixth chapter of Romans, is that it is not our responsibility to overcome sin, or even resist sin, but we must be freed from sin. The Word of God teaches us that through an identification with Christ, in His death, His burial, and His resurrection, we are joined together in union with Him. We have been freed and released from sin. All of our trying and struggling will never free us from sin. Freedom from sin is an accomplished work. It is something that is already done, and is a gift to us. Victory is not something that you struggle and strive to obtain. Victory is a gift from God through the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:57).

The problem that most Christians have in living the Christian life, is their approach. It has been totally opposite to what the Word of God teaches. The mentality of the church today, is to look at the commandments of God as something they must accomplish or do. They believe that the more they do these things, the stronger they will become. They call this "Christian maturity" or growing in Christ, but actually it is just a concept in the back of their minds that is destroying them as Christians. This is because the concept of getting stronger and stronger, being able to handle things and overcome sin, has put a trust and reliance in themselves. This destruction happens subtly.

When I first came into Christ, I knew that I needed Jesus 100%. I didn't know the Word, or anything about the Lord, I just knew that Jesus was everything I needed. Now that I have grown in the Lord, read the Bible two or three times, and have daily devotions and prayer, I have come to a place where I should be able to overcome sin. This is the misconception that many Christians fall under and what leads them to their devastation trying to live the Christian life.

Someone may be a Christian for ten years and suddenly, something happens that propels him to seek counseling. He may pour out his heart and say, "I have been a Christian for ten years, and I just can't believe what I did!" What he is really saying is that he thought he was beyond that. He thought he had grown, that he had strength and maturity. As a result, when his will power came up against the power of sin, the power of sin defeated him. This is exactly what the Apostle Paul tells us in the seventh chapter of the book of Romans. He says, "I know what God demands. I know the good that I want to do, but I end up doing the very thing that I hate. The will is with me, but the power to perform that, I don't know" (Rom. 7:15-18). He says that he knows what God demands: that the law is holy and perfect and just and righteous, and a good thing, but he ends up failing every time he wants to do good. He realizes that evil is present within him. The will to do good is within him, but he doesn't know how to release it. Eventually, he comes to a place of utter wretchedness. Most Christians are still living in the seventh chapter of Romans. They struggle trying to conquer the power of sin. Sin is not just a matter of doing something right or wrong. If you believe that, you will never understand the sixth, seventh, and eighth chapter of Romans. In these three chapters, Paul is not talking about sinful acts. He is not talking about doing right or doing wrong. He is talking about "sin" in the singular-sin not "sins." Sins are acts that spring from sin. So, what is sin? Most Christians don't realize what sin is, and don't understand the battle they are having with what the Word of God calls sin.

THE EFFECTS OF SIN

Before I explain exactly what sin is, I am going to talk about the effects sin has had upon the human race. I believe that you will identify with this, because sin also affects the life of a believer, even a Christian. I will also explain how to tap into a brand new source and power to overcome this principle that the Word of God calls sin. If you read through the seventh chapter of Romans, you will see that even though it says the old man is crucified, a person still can struggle with sin, by the power of his will. Many Christians try to live their life by the power of their will (Rom. 7:18).

As we look at the effects of sin, we will take a trichotomous viewpoint. Some people are dichotomous, which means they are a two-part being. They believe they have a body and a soul but not a spirit. They have an inward man and an outward man - a two-part being. I don't believe that we are a dichotomy; I believe that we are a trichotomy because the Word of God tells us in I Thessalonians 5:23, that we are spirit, soul, and body. I don't think that you can combine the Greek words for spirit and soul and make them the same thing. I think that God meant exactly what He said when He said that man consists of a spirit, a soul and a body. Theologically, the soul refers to the mind, will, emotions and affections.

Sometimes in the Word of God, the word soul or spirit is used by itself and refers to the entire person. For instance, in 1 Peter 3:20, it says that eight souls were saved by water. This doesn't mean that eight minds, wills, and emotions were saved. It means eight people were saved. Soul-winning is winning the whole person to Christ, not just their mind, will, and emotions. Sometimes in the Word of God, the word soul or spirit is used alone, and refers to the entire person. But most of the time when the Word talks about the soul, it refers to the mind, will and emotions. It is difficult to separate the different parts of man because we are a total entity-spirit, soul, and body (Heb. 4:12). It will help us understand how to live the Christian life if we understand the terms in the Bible such as sin, the flesh, the soul, and the spirit. Furthermore, understanding these terms will enable us to walk in the spirit and not fulfill the lust of the flesh (Gal. 5:16). (I will define the flesh on subsequent pages.)

HOW SIN AFFECTS OUR MIND

Now let's discuss the effect sin has on the mind. Ephesians 4:18 says, "Having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their heart." So the first effect that sin has on our mind is that it

darkens it. This is to say that we really don't know truth like we should. As much as we want to know the truth, as much as we want to know and have understanding, we really don't perceive as we ought to perceive. Our understanding has been darkened through Adam with the fall of man. In 1 Corinthians 13:12, the apostle Paul goes on to say that we look through a glass darkly, but then face to face. In other words he is saying that we perceive things through a dim light. We are not seeing and perceiving truth the way we should see, the way that we should perceive truth. Now if you don't think that is true, just look at all the Christians around you, and listen to the different opinions they have on many issues. It is quite obvious that they do not know and understand truth as they ought to know. This is how sin affects the mind. Ephesians 4:18 says, "Having the understanding darkened."

HOW SIN AFFECTS OUR WILL

We also have a will. How does sin affect our will? Sin has actually enslaved the will. Romans 6:6 says, "Knowing this that our old man is crucified with him that the body of sin might be destroyed that henceforth we should not serve sin." What Romans 6 says is that a person's will is really enslaved. Paul is talking about sin and says, "That henceforth we should not serve sin." This refers to sin in the life of an unbeliever. The reason why an unbeliever can never be free from sin is because he is enslaved to sin. In Romans 6, Paul uses an allegory (or a picture) of a master-slave relationship. What Paul is trying to tell us, is that through Christ we have been freed. He also brings out the point that before we came to Christ and were identified with Him in his death, burial and resurrection, we were enslaved to sin. Sin enslaves the will. For instance, if I was a prisoner of war, and was in Vietnam, and said, "I have a free will, and I choose to return to the United States of America tomorrow." It wouldn't matter if I chose to be in the United States, the truth is that I would still be in Vietnam and am enslaved. I am a captive to the enemy. Paul is telling us that we are a captive to the enemy, and that enemy is called "sin." In the sixth chapter of Romans, sin is personified. What does personified mean? In the book of Proverbs, wisdom is personified. "Wisdom" crieth from the streets (Prov. 1:20). Solomon is talking about wisdom as if it were a person. It is given an identity. In the same way, Paul talks about sin as if it were a person. He says there is a master-slave relationship. Sin is the master and mankind is the slave. Sin is personified as a master over mankind. In verse 12, it says, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body that you should obey it in the lust thereof." Sin refers to something that is personified, something that reigns like a king reigns. A king has dominion. He has authority. He exercises that authority and says, "Don't let sin reign." Until a person comes into Christ, sin reigns in his life, sin is in authority. Sin is personified. It is like a person who exercises dominion and authority over you. In Romans 6:14 it says, "Sin shall not have dominion over you for you are not under law but under grace." Paul is talking about sin in a person's life who is still under law; before he comes into the grace of God. Sin exercises its authority and jurisdiction over people's lives. Therefore, we have it all backwards. Our thinking is wrong. For example, we may discuss whether a homosexual should be ordained into the ministry, and thus create controversy. It is not a matter of whether a homosexual should be ordained, but whether we will tell him how

to be freed from homosexuality. That is the real question. If a person is really enslaved to an enemy, like the example of the prisoner in Vietnam, can he really be free if he wants to be free? Even if he says with his will, "I am going to be in American tomorrow." Can he really be free? No, he can't. This is the way people in the world, who are outside of Christ think. A person may say, "I am going to quit drinking. I am going to quit committing adultery. I am going to change my life. I am going to start doing right. I will go to church." But can he really do those things? A person doesn't know how evil he is until he tries to be good (Rom. 7:21). This is the principle of the law. As soon as God put up his standard which is the law, then we saw what He really demanded (Rom. 7:12). So then we try to fulfill the standard of the law. We say, "Okay, I can do that." This is the person living Romans 7. The will is with the person, but before long, he finds out that he doesn't have the ability to carry out the things he tries to do. Why? Because he is enslaved to sin. Therefore, even though a person desires with his will to do what is right, his will is enslaved outside the will of Christ.

HOW SIN AFFECTS OUR EMOTIONS

I believe that our emotions are the greatest problem that hinders us from living the Christian life. The problem is, that Christians are trying to live their life guided by their emotions. They live by how they feel. Common expressions are, "Oh, I felt the Spirit tonight." Or, "I never felt the Spirit." But the Word of God never appeals to our emotions or to the way we feel. This is because sin has affected our emotions. We can't trust our emotions. Sometimes our emotions will line up with the Word of God, but sometimes our emotions won't. For instance, if I tell my wife how beautiful she looks in a certain dress, that it makes her look dynamite, what happens to her emotions? They go up and up and up. Then, if I tell her that it is too bad that the dress doesn't fit her, what happens to her emotions? They go down, down, and down. This is what sin does to our emotions. We can't always trust them. Emotions are affected by the circumstances in our life.

We can get pumped up in our emotions and get high, but just as quickly our emotions can go down, and we get low. That is the problem many people have living the Christian life. They are living the Christian life based on how they feel-on their emotions which go up and down. God doesn't ask us to live the Christian life based on our emotions. He asks us to live the Christian life based upon the truth and upon faith in the truth. Truth doesn't change. Our emotions do change. An example of this is an experience my friend Phil had. He was sick and went to church. After the service some people prayed for him. He said that suddenly, he felt much better. He declared, "I am really healed. I feel healed." Then the Lord quickened him with the revelation that he was not healed because he felt healed, but that he was healed because the Word of God says he is healed. Immediately, Phil caught the error of basing things on his emotions and he went to a higher source which is truth and it was the truth that set him free. Romans 1:17 says, "The just shall live by faith." But how? God tells us to live by the truth. He tells us to live by faith, not by our emotions.

HOW SIN AFFECTS OUR BODY

Romans 8:10 says, "If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness." I believe the effect sin has on the physical body is the process of dying. The body is dead because of sin, but the spirit man is now alive and is righteous in the spirit realm. Romans 8:22 says, "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth until now, and not only that, but ourselves also, which hath the first fruits of the spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves waiting for the adoption to wit, the redemption of our bodies." Therefore, the effect sin has upon the body is death-the body dies. I believe that if the people who have already died could speak to us, they would agree with me, because when Adam transgressed there was a law that came into motion. It is described in Romans 8:2. It says, "For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death." The law of sin and death came into effect quickly. In Romans 7:23, it says, "But I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." This is the first time we see the apostle Paul describe sin as being a law. "It is the law of sin that is in my members." Do you know what a law is? A law is something that is consistent. It works the same way all the time. When the apostle Paul tried to do good, he ended up doing evil; and when he tried to do good again he ended up doing what he hated. He tried further to do good and ended up doing the very thing that he did not want to do. He discovered that sin was more than just an act, more than just an accident. It was a law. There was a law of sin in his members. That is the reason Paul could not defeat it. Verse 15 says, "For that which I do I allow not, and what I would that do I not, but what I hate that do I. If then I do that which I would not I consent to the law that the law is good. Now then it is no more I that do it but sin that dwelleth in me for I know that in me, that is in my flesh dwelleth no good thing, for the will is (notice his will power) present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not but the evil which I would not that I do." Paul discovered that sin was not an accident. It was more than just struggling against sin and saying, "I will overcome sin if I try real hard." Paul discovered that sin was much more than that. Sin was a law that worked against him.

FIGHTING THE LAW OF SIN

A law has a natural power, it has a natural force. There is a law of gravity which is a natural force. If you drop a pen it naturally falls down to the floor. I don't have to take it and push it down to the floor. Without any effort on the pen's part, a natural force pulls it to the earth because of the law of gravity. A natural law is working against the pen. Now Paul says that the

way he first dealt with sin was with his own resources, his own power, and his own will. He said, "I am not going to do this anymore." Will that work against sin? Have you ever made a resolution and said, "I am not going to do this anymore?" Then within ten minutes that thing defeats you again. Romans 7:21 says, "I find then a law that when I would do good evil is present with me." Evil was present with Paul. When is evil present with you? It is when you want to do good. Paul continues, "The first time I wanted to do good and I found out that evil is present with me, and the third time and the hundredth time and the thousandth time and the millionth time that I wanted to do good I discovered there was a law." Evil was on Paul's tail trying to defeat and beat him. Paul said that with his will he was not going to do the thing he didn't want to do, that he was going to conquer it. He was exercising willpower. Can willpower overcome sin? Can the will overcome the law? Only on a temporary basis. For example, I can lift 50 pounds, but I am going to try and overcome the law of gravity by only lifting seven ounces. I will lift a Bible in the air and hold it up, thus defying the law of gravity. However, the law of gravity is still pushing down on my arm and hand, but I am defying it. This is what Paul calls willpower. Willpower defies the power of sin. You may say that you are not going to do a certain thing, you may grit your teeth and try to defy the law of sin just like I tried to defy the law of gravity. But if I try and hold the Bible in the air for several hours or until tomorrow morning, by 8:00 a.m. tomorrow, not only will I drop this book that only weighs seven ounces, but I will probably end up in the hospital to get my arm wrapped. Why? Because willpower exerts a natural force, a natural power. I don't have to push the Bible to the floor and hold it down there. It falls naturally. Gravity says, "Just hold it out there until morning and I will keep working on you. You may be able to lift 50 pounds but just wait, this little seven ounce book is going to defeat you." This is true because it is a law. Paul says, "I tried to live the Christian life with my will." Romans 7:18 says, "For I know that in me dwelleth no good thing, for the will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not." He is saying that he has the will, but not the ability. He has the desire but he can't produce the goods. It is the same with us. Every time we want to do good and try to do good, we might temporarily do good, and temporarily defeat the habit, but within a matter of time sin will defeat us because it is a law. It never quits exerting its authority and its power upon us. So what should we do?

This is the question that hinders people from living the Christian life. They try to live the Christian life by overcoming sin, resisting sin, and trying to defeat sin. That is the way they try to live their life. But they haven't discovered what Paul discovered-that sin is a law. It works in our members. It exercises authority and power against us. It exerts itself upon us. The only way to defeat a law (the law of sin) is to put another law into operation that is greater than the former law. Let's use gravity for an example. There is a greater law than gravity, that is the law of thrust. When jet engines are put on airplanes, they will defy gravity. The law of gravity still is in effect. It is pushing on the plane, but there is a greater law (thrust) in effect that pushes on the plane in the opposite direction and defies gravity. Gravity is still pulling on it, but a greater law is in operation. This is also true with the law of density. If I fill a balloon with helium, the law of density comes into effect. Gravity only works under certain conditions. The helium gas is lighter than the force of gravity and the balloon lifts off the ground and it floats up into the air. A law that is higher than gravity is put into operation to defeat gravity. This is the only way to defeat a law. The Word of God says that the only way we can live a consistent Christian life, not based upon our emotions, mind, will or body, is to put a higher law into operation. One that has more power, more strength, and more ability than the law of sin. What held mankind (outside of

Christ) in slavery to Satan is inside the spirit man. When a man is without Christ, he is spiritually dead. His spirit is dead in trespasses and sins as described in Ephesians 2. The spirit is dead towards God and it is alive towards Satan. Man's spirit is the part that is in fellowship and communion with God. When man sinned, Satan usurped authority and took over and occupied the spirit area of man. According to Ephesians 2:2, "It is the Spirit that now works in the children of disobedience." It goes on to say, "You were by nature the child of wrath. The spirit that now works in the children of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2-3). The reason we can't quit sinning is because sin started from within and went without, because that is our nature. The believer has one nature and the non-believer has one nature. I don't mean a old nature and a new nature, not a white dog and a black dog inside of us. The believer has one nature and that is the nature of God, the nature of Christ. The unbeliever has one nature and that is the nature of the enemy or Satan. Romans 6:6 says, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him that the body of sin might be destroyed that henceforth we should not serve sin." I believe that God dealt Satan a deadly blow, because not only did Jesus Christ die for our sins so that we can be forgiven, but He took our sinful nature upon himself and crucified it and buried it. When He came out of the grave, we came out with Him. We are in union with Him and are a brand new creation. The old self is crucified. We are not the same as we were before we came to Christ. We have a new nature.

OUR OLD NATURE IS DEAD - WE ARE A NEW CREATION

Look at your hands. Are there nail prints on your hands? No, it was not your body that was crucified, therefore it was not your soul that was crucified because God uses your personality, your mind, will and emotions to express the life of Jesus. He did not leave you without any personality, without any mind or without any emotions. Obviously they were not crucified and put to death. Therefore, according to the Word of God, the only part of us that was literally crucified with Christ is our nature, or our old spirit which is dead in trespasses and sins. I believe that Romans 6 says that the old man was crucified with Christ. What happened when the old man was crucified with Christ? The old spirit, the old man, was crucified so that the body of sin would be destroyed. The root and power of sin was destroyed. Some theologians use the word body or soma in Greek, to correspond to the physical body. The physical body is now inactive, inoperative and not under the dominion and authority of Satan. Christ broke the power of sin through His resurrection. Now that we are made one with Him we are free from sin. God replaced the old man with Christ. Our new man is created in righteousness and true holiness. This is the mystery that has been hidden for generations, but is now manifest to us the saints, which is Christ in us the hope of glory. Christ crucified the old man so that the power of sin would be destroyed and we would not have to serve sin.

However, our mind did not change. Our emotions are still affected by sin to some degree. Our will has been loosed and freed, but we must make a choice. Romans 8:10 says that the body is dead or in the process of dying. But the spirit is alive because of righteousness. Our true nature

as a believer is the nature of Christ. Although, there is still something operating that the Bible calls the flesh.

THE FLESH

The flesh is the combination of the unrenewed mind, the emotions and the physical body. Galatians 5:16 says, "Walk in the spirit and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh." In verse 17, it says, "The flesh lust against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh and these are contrary one to another so that you cannot do the things that you would." There is a war going on between the flesh and the spirit. Walking in the flesh is when we choose to operate and move in a direction independent of Christ. If we are not operating in faith, we will fulfill the lust of the flesh. The lust of the flesh is everything that was programmed into us by the "old man." The effects of the old man, or our old nature, can be seen in our flesh and in our unrenewed mind.

I was told that I was ugly all my life. I believe I am ugly because I was told so. People said that I would never amount to anything, that I was no good. They said I would never make it, that I was dumb, stupid. This was programmed into my flesh. The only way to overcome this kind of inferiority complex, heal emotions that are damaged, and take away the hurt, is to live our new life and utilize our new power source, which is Christ. My mind might tell me that I am stupid, but what does God say? God says that I have the mind of Christ. The mind of Christ is where Christ is. This does not mean that we have a new brain, it means that we have a new source of wisdom that is beyond anything we could ever learn in school. It is in us now because Jesus lives in us.

Take a moment right now, and by faith look at Jesus. He will show you who you are and what He thinks of you. He will also show you how to heal your emotional wounds. Today, people are really into inner healing. I believe in inner healing, but receive it differently than most people. The way I learned was to look at myself, be introspective and find out where the damaged emotion came from. When I look at it, I realize it came in my childhood. This is a common approach that many counselors advocate, but all it does is show us the problem. We constantly look at the problem, and all that does is stir up our emotions. Our emotions say, "I feel rejected. I am hurt. I am devastated by rejection." When something happens that reminds us of the rejection, the pain starts to surface. But now when this happens, I immediately turn to Christ, who is my new life and I say, "But the Word says, Christ says, God says, that I am not accepted according to my performance which is the world's way. The world's system says that if I perform well, then I will have friends; if I am a good mate, then I will be loved. If not, my wife will divorce me. However, I no longer operate in that realm. In my spirit man I am accepted in the beloved (Jesus). I am not accepted based on my performance. Many Christians get this confused. They think then that God doesn't care what they do. He approves and disapproves of things that we do. But our acceptance is not based on what we do or don't do. Our acceptance is based only on Jesus and what He has done for us. Often, when people accept Christ they spend the rest of

their lives trying to do things so God will accept them. But God says He has already accepted us perfectly and completely in Christ. We are as righteous today just as Jesus Christ is righteous. But often, people don't believe this because they focus on what they are doing or not doing, that is contrary to this statement. We are just as righteous as Jesus Christ.

You may be thinking, that sounds good, but I know where I have failed and where I have fallen short. 1 Corinthians 1:26 says, "For you see your calling brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called, but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise and hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, the base things of the world and the things which are despised hath God chosen, yea the things that are not, to bring to naught the things that are. That no flesh (no person) should ever glory in his presence. But of him are you in Christ Jesus who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption that according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory only in the Lord." Therefore, I can say that you are just as righteous, just as accepted, just as loved as Jesus Christ himself. Why can I say that? Because 1 Corinthians 1:30 goes on to say, "We have been made of him but of him are you in Christ Jesus who of God is made unto wisdom righteousness, sanctification, redemption." The reason we can say that we are as righteousness as Jesus Christ, is because Jesus Christ is our righteousness. He is our redemption. He is our salvation. He doesn't give us salvation, He is our salvation. He doesn't give us righteousness, he is our righteousness. No flesh, or person can ever glory in His presence; he that glories will only glory in the Lord. God has designed salvation from the beginning to the end to be nothing less than Christ.

WE MUST LIVE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE BY FAITH

If you struggle trying to live the Christian life, it may be because you thought that the Christian life was something that you were supposed to do and you didn't see that it is Christ from beginning to end. The way you live it is by faith. How did you receive Christ? By faith. How do you walk in Him? By faith. How do you overcome temptation? By faith in Him and His ability to overcome it. How do you live holy? By His ability to live holy in you. How do you produce love and joy and peace and long-suffering? Not by might, saying, "I am going to try real hard to love that guy. I am going to try real hard to work up joy. I am going to try real hard to be peaceful." No. It is a manifestation of Jesus' life. We have tried to imitate Him and produce His life. It is like a monkey trying to be a human being - he tries real hard. For us to try and be like Jesus is like a monkey trying to be like a human being. We can try real hard and may be funny; God may look at us and think that we are humorous, but then God says, "Why not let the only one who is life be your life?" Why don't you let Him be your righteousness? Why don't you let Him defeat sin? Why don't you let Him be your victory?" You see, victory is not something that you try for and struggle for-it is a gift. Victory is Christ. I Corinthians 15:57 says, "Thanks be to God that giveth us the victory through the Lord Jesus Christ." He is our victory. So when sin comes and the law comes to try and defeat you, what do you do? Do you say, "No, I am not

going to do this?" You should say, "There is law of the spirit that brings life to me. This law set me free from the law of sin." So now, when the law of sin comes against me, I say, "Jesus, you answer the door." When temptation comes, immediately turn your attention to Jesus. You don't have the power to overcome this sin or conquer this temptation, but Jesus does. When you turn your attention immediately to Him, He is your victory. Jesus helps us overcome and conquer temptations, circumstances, high imaginations and anything else. We live His life by faith. He is our power source. The old man has been crucified. We are a brand new creation. We now have Christ, so henceforth we will never again serve sin. Sin dwells in the physical realm. Sin used to be our master. It used to usurp authority over us, but we have a new master now. We can turn to our new master. We are discharged from living in the military on earth. When sin gives us an order, we don't have to follow the order. We have a new master which is the strength and power of our life, He is our life. Romans 5:10 says, "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son. (Reconciliation means to be brought into a friendly relationship. We have been brought into a friendly relationship) through Jesus' death." "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved." How? By His death and by his resurrection life. The amplified Bible says it like this: "When we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more now being reconciled, we shall be saved, that is daily delivered from sin's dominion by his resurrection life." Do you understand what this says? His death paid for our sin. But it is His life within us that is the power to overcome temptation and the power of the devil. It is His life that allows us to conquer the circumstances that come against us. It is His resurrected life that resides within us by faith. He is our power source and through Him we have victory. His death paid the debt for our sin. What is the point of our sins being forgiven if we live this life defeated? We must also defeat sin daily, as it says in the amplified Bible, "Daily delivered from sin's dominion by his resurrection life."

LIVING THE VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIFE

The Christian life is not only hard to live, it is impossible to live. We can't live it on our own power. But there is one within us that can live it when we make Him our power source by faith, in every circumstance we may face in our life. In Him, is the ability to overcome sin's dominion daily. His resurrection life resides in us. We do this by faith. First we must surrender to Him. Christ can't live His life through us if we don't give Him our life. If you hold back, you'll never be victorious. It is only by total surrender that we obtain victory. He can't live through us if we won't give Him the reigns. It has to be absolute surrender. Once we surrender, we just simply take His resurrected life that is within us and use His power to defeat the enemy. 1 John 3:9 says, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifest that he might destroy the works of the devil." Who is going to destroy it? Only Christ has the power to destroy the works of the devil. He resides within us. He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit. We never have to be defeated again. If you are defeated, it is because you have chosen to be defeated. If you sin, it is because you failed to look to Christ as your power source to defeat sin. The Bible doesn't teach sinless

perfection, but it does teach that you have the power through Christ to actually defeat and conquer sin. It is not you doing it, it is Christ in you that defeats sin. We fail when we do not take the time to focus on Christ as our life. But first we must reach the point of total weakness before Christ can be our total strength. God's grace is sufficient for you, His strength is made perfect in your weakness. "Therefore, I glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me." It says the same thing in Romans 7, "Oh wretched man that I am. I have come to the end of myself. Who shall deliver me?" (Rom. 7:24). Thank God it has been done through Christ (Rom. 7:25). You see, Christ can't be your strength until you come to absolute weakness. Until you admit that you can't do it on your own-you can't conquer sin, or defeat the power of the enemy, and say, "All right God, I am going to put my faith in Christ to be my total strength." Only then will He be your strength and power. We don't have the ability to live the Christian life, it is our response to His ability that lets us live in victory. God did not come to help us live the Christian life, to strengthen our flesh. He came to get us out of the way so Christ could live through us and give us the victory. This is so no flesh can ever glory in His presence. No person will ever glory. It is Jesus who died for our sins. It is Him within us that conquered sin. It is Him from beginning to end. But the devil deceives Christians by saying Jesus did it in the beginning, but now it is our responsibility. We've got to go do this thing. That is what is preached to us from the pulpit, "You've got to go do it." When we try and do it ourselves, we end up as defeated Christians moaning and groaning and living by our emotions, living the Christian life up and down. The people most in need of counseling are the Christians. They are worse off than the world. It is because they try to live victoriously by their own effort. God will let you live by your effort until you hit a brick wall. He will let you get to the end of yourself and then, when you have gone to the end of yourself and say, "Oh wretched man that I am," that is, I am so miserable. I have no ability. I know what God wants, but I can't do it." Then God rejoices! It is then that Christ can be your total resource. I am not talking about avoiding spiritual burnout, trying to patch someone up, so his flesh can go a little longer. No, I am saying, "Burnout buddy, burnout!" Until you get there, Christ can't be your life. Live the Christian life through a new power and resource, which is Christ. Live it by faith. As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him, by faith. He is a Savior that delivers us from the power of sin. This is revealed in Romans 8:2, "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath set me free from the law of sin and death. The spirit that brings Jesus' life to me hath set me free. Hath made me free from the law of sin and death." It doesn't work just sometimes, or once in a while, it says He hath done it. He is everything. We are complete in Him. The living Bible says, "When you have Jesus you have everything that you need. He is everything. We are complete in Him. He is the completion. Now we just need to renew our mind with what He says in His Word He is. He is our life."

WALK IN THE SPIRIT

This does not mean changing our flesh, it means walking in the spirit and not fulfilling the lust of the flesh man. Renewing our mind to the truth of who Christ is, is a process. By faith we exchange our flesh life, (the effect that sin has had upon our personality) for His life. We do this

by faith. It is not a one-time experience. It is not an emotional experience; however, it can be. It's not like the baptism of the spirit and you are instantly changed. It is a learning process to exchange Jesus' life for your life, on a moment by moment, hour by hour basis. When we fail to do this, our flesh man will take over. But when we look to Jesus to be our life, we exchange our flesh man for His life by faith. Paul says, "In the flesh dwells no good thing." He is not saying that he is an evil person. He is saying that if we take the flesh man; the mind, will, emotions, and body, and separate them from Christ, it will go in a direction that is contrary to God. No good will dwell there. But when we walk in the spirit with dependence on Christ, He will express His life through us. The word faith is another word for trust. We put our faith and dependence on Christ to be our life. He will use our mind, emotions, and body to express His life. Romans 8:10-13 says, "If Christ be in you the body is dead because of sin, the spirit has become alive because of righteousness. But if the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies (Mortal means subject to death. A death doomed body is subject to death-it gets old and wrinkles) by the spirit that dwells in you. Therefore brethren, we are debtors not to the flesh to live after the flesh, for if ye live after the flesh you shall die, but if you through the spirit do mortify (which means put to death) the deeds of the body (or the deeds of the flesh or the deeds that are left from the old man) ye shall live. As many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

I believe that this says that the Spirit of God is going to do two things in our life. When we look to Him by faith, He will put to death the deeds of the body. That is, the flesh, the part of us living outside of Christ that wants to go its own way. The Spirit will conquer the power of sin. The Spirit will mortify the deeds of the flesh. It is not our own ability. We must cooperate with Jesus by faith. But He puts to death the deeds of the flesh so that it doesn't express itself. He also will quicken our mortal body, that is, He will make it alive with the life of Jesus Christ. The Spirit does two things: It puts to death the flesh and its deeds that are contrary to God, and it makes us alive to express the very life of Jesus Christ through our mortal bodies. This is what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 5:18 says, "Be not drunk with wine (don't be under the influence of wine) but be filled with the Holy Spirit." (In the Greek it is a continuous tense -be filled and keep on being filled.) When we are filled with the Holy Spirit and keep on being filled, then the life of Jesus Christ floods through us to express His life. We must do this by faith. It is not an emotional experience that will give us goose bumps and suddenly we will say, "I am filled with the Holy Ghost!" It is bringing the life of Christ to our mortal body. That is what the Spirit has done to glorify Jesus.

LET JESUS LIVE THROUGH YOU

An example of this is a tea bag. Imagine a cup of hot water and a tea bag. Set the tea bag up and say, "Water, be like tea." However, the water can't be like tea so you put the tea bag into the water and the strength of the tea goes into the water and then it is tea. But really, the tea is still in the tea bag. It is the same with us. It is the strength of Jesus and His life that goes into us. He is

still God and we are still us, but it is His strength and life that comes up through us. Romans 6:16 says, "Whomsoever you yield yourself to his servants you become..." When you tell a lie, you have to tell another lie to cover up the first lie and then you must tell another, to cover up that one. It is a chain reaction. Sin is the same way. We become a slave to sin. But it says if we yield ourselves to righteousness, we become its slave. It is not just taking Christ as our life in one circumstance, it is taking His life moment by moment in every circumstance. When we walk in this, before long it is like a mindset where we learn to let Him be our life and we take His life. All of a sudden we begin to see consistent victory. Usually we don't see it as much as other people around us see it. We start to learn that the just live by faith. Just trust in Him. Look to Him. Turn to Him. It is so simple. It is Jesus.

I struggled for ten to fifteen years trying to find this truth. It was just Jesus. It is that simple. He is the victory. It is Him. You don't work for it, there is no earning it. The more that I see this truth, the more that I distinguish the law mentality which is all through the church. It is saturated through the church and the preaching. If you don't receive this revelation and are not grounded in it, you will fall back into condemnation. But if Christ is living your life, if He is your victory, you won't respond to your emotions. People that are not grounded in the truth will immediately respond to law. Immediately, they will respond to the consciousness of sin. And again it is back to their ability to do this and that, to quit this or not do that. Because they haven't learned yet that there can be something very consistent. It is living a life of faith as a brand new creation. Having a brand new identity, a brand new person, a brand new power source, which is Christ. God says, "To be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and (soul) peace" (Rom. 8:6). Our emotions can come under the control of the indwelling Christ, but it won't happen if we are carnally minded. We must turn to Christ who indwells in us. Our mind plays a big part in this. When we are rejected, we must say, "No, I am accepted" (Eph. 1:6). When we are condemned, we must say, "I am accepted. I am righteous" (2 Cor. 5:21). When we are offended or persecuted, we can rejoice. Paul says, "I know what it is to be with and I know what it is to be without. I know what it is to abound and I know what it is to be without" (Phil. 4:12). Paul seemed to glory in his infirmities. He is not saying, "Ha ha ha! It was a wonderful experience." But he is saying, "I am so in union with Christ that I am strengthened and infused with power and strength from Christ." It was Christ's strength that brought him through all his tribulations, stonings, and sufferings. It was not because Paul was a strong-willed guy, or that he was just determined to get up and preach in some other city. He says that it was the glory of Christ that strengthened him. It was Christ that was infusing strength into him-keeping him going, pressing towards the mark. We can use that same strength to withstand rejection, persecution, sin, or the circumstances of life, whatever we face. Paul had to allow Christ to dwell in him, or how else could he reveal this mystery to live a victorious life? How could he write the book of Philippians while in jail? "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice!" Paul was sitting there in jail. Most of us, if we were walking in the flesh would be moaning and groaning, "Come and get me out of here. I am being treated so bad." But there was not one iota of defeat in Paul. He said, "What has happened to me has happened for the furtherance of the gospel. They chained me to the prison guards in Caesar's place and I witnessed to them and got them saved" (Phil. 4:22). All Paul could see was what Christ was accomplishing in and through him. That is a true revelation of Christ living within us.

Today, make the choice to let Jesus live through you. Let Jesus be your new life. Then, you will live the victorious abundant life that God wants you to live.

USDA CHOICE FLESH

Introduction

Are you living your Christian life in frustration because you can't seem to be the good Christian you want to be? Do you sometimes feel as if you are a slave to your flesh?

Even the Apostle Paul said, For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I (Rom. 7:15). There is a reason that many Christians struggle with living the Christian life. But, if we know the root to the problem and deal with it, we can live a victorious, joyful life.

I have been through many struggles during my life. I've also seen many miracles. I was on a deathbed in 1976 and God raised me up. We saw our stillborn daughter restored to life. About five years ago I came to work for Andrew Wommack and I was totally destitute. I had pastored a church and there had been a split. I was totally burned out and tired of trying to live the Christian life.

Then the Lord began a process of renewing my mind. Through a period of several years God has opened a picture more clearly to me. As a result, I have ceased from my struggles and come to a place of rest. I have learned to let God do what He wanted to do all the time.

A New Creation

The Bible tells us that we are a new creation in Jesus. First Corinthians 6:17 says, But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Romans 8:9 says, Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. The Apostle Paul talked about a revelation - a mystery that has been hidden from ages and generations, but is now made manifest which is Christ in you, the hope of glory (Col. 1:26-27). Paul said in Galatians 2:20 that it's no longer I living, it's now Christ living in me and through me. Romans 6:6 says it this way: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

As surely as Jesus Christ went to the cross and died between two thieves, the word of God teaches that you and I, the old self, actually died with Him on that cross. That's a reality in the spirit world. The Bible tells about us being members of Christ... of His body and of His flesh and of His bones (Eph. 5:30). Of course, Second Corinthians 5:17 says, If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

The Problem

Now if that is true, and we know it is, why do we still have thoughts of jealousy, envy, strife, lust, and other things that enter our minds? We are new creations in Christ Jesus. Old things are passed away. The old self has been crucified.

Sometimes, when I see someone succeed I become envious instead of rejoicing with him. Have you ever felt that way? Sometimes when someone is failing I feel a little better. I don't feel like such a failure myself. Some people may say it's because I'm suffering from rejection as a child, and what I need is deliverance from a spirit of rejection or inferiority. We all know the reality of evil spirits, but as I began to study the scriptures I found a different answer. I found out that my number one problem wasn't the devil.

I don't deny the reality of the devil. Even Jesus was tempted directly by the devil (Mt. 4:1-11). Paul says in Ephesians 6:12 that we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers and rulers of the darkness of this world and wicked spirits in heavenly places. We know that evil spirits are out there and we know that they would like to affect the life of the believer.

As I studied the scriptures, I discovered that there is a root problem to the struggles we face as believers. If we are not aware of this problem and how to deal with it, it results in what the Bible calls strongholds (2 Cor. 10:4). Then, as a result of those strongholds, there is demonic activity that begins to operate in the life of the believer (Eph. 4:27).

Many of you may disagree with me at first, but the root of our problem is one word - sin. The reason you may disagree is because we have only a partial understanding of this subject. When you hear the word sin most of you think of something you did. You think of an action, like the time you got angry or gossiped; but I'm not talking about sin in that context.

I've discovered that in Romans 5-8, the word sin is used 41 times. Forty of the times, the word sin is used as a noun. Only once is the word sin used as a verb, indicating an action or something you do. As a noun, the scripture is talking about a principle.

To understand this better, let's look at Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words. This is what Vine says about the word sin as a noun. The Greek word is hamartia and literally, that word means a missing of the mark. Sin is coming short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). Literally, sin means to miss the mark. So, sin can refer to an action. But Vine also says that the earliest known use is largely lost in the New Testament. He says that sin is a principle. It's a source of action. It's not the act itself, but it's an inward element that produces the act. Then he says that sin is a governing principle or power. Sin is an organized power that acts through the members of the body. The body is the instrument.

Vine also says that sin, the governing power that tries to operate through our body, is personified. He lists 16 scriptures in which sin is personified. To personify something is to give it

personality. In the Old Testament, wisdom was personified. Wisdom wasn't a person, but wisdom cried from the streets (Prov. 1:20). I believe that the Apostle Paul personified the word sin in Romans, chapters 5-8. I'm not saying that sin seems to almost have a personality. It seems to have a tactic. It schemes against you. It tries to deceive you. It wants to beat you.

In Romans 7:22, we can qualify what Vine says. The Apostle Paul says, For I delight in the law of God after the inward man. If you're a born-again believer, in the innermost part of your being you always desire and delight to do the will of God. That is our new nature which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness (Eph. 4:24). We also have an old nature which is described in Ephesians 2:1-2 as a spirit of disobedience. It is this old spirit that was dead in trespasses and sins. This spirit is who we were outside of Christ and in Adam. This old spirit was crucified with Christ and there was a new creation. Old things passed away and everything became new in our spirits. There may be times you fail. You may have all kinds of feelings, but inside you delight to do the will of God.

Then, what is the problem? Paul describes the problem in the next verse. Romans 7:23 says, But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity [or slavery] to the law of sin which is in my members. Paul knows the principle of the new creation, but there's another principle that he is facing which he calls a law of sin. I heard one person call it a law of defeat. Paul says this law wars against the mind. You're either going to win or lose in the mind.

The Flesh

According to Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, the word warring means to attack. There is a principle attacking your mind. It schemes against you, trying to deceive you and defeat you. It's warring against your mind, trying to bring you into captivity to what Paul calls the law of sin. For all practical purposes, I call this law the flesh. I believe they are so closely related that they can hardly be separated. I'm referring to sin as the law of sin, the flesh, and self sufficiency.

Self sufficiency is operating independently of the Spirit. Self sufficiency is what happened at the tree of knowledge of good and evil. We tried to be God and do things in our own strength and ability.

You have all the resources you need in Christ, but you can still operate just like an unbeliever. It shouldn't surprise you to see television evangelists or anyone else operate in the flesh. We are all capable of anything if we operate independently of this new creation that we are in Christ and begin to operate in the realm of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21).

Exactly how does this sin principle war against the mind? I've discovered in my life that it works something like this: I'm at work and I'm having a bad day. Everything that could possibly go wrong goes wrong. Then I get a thought in my mind that says, Why don't you go over there and give Tom a piece of your mind because Tom is the problem around here. If it wasn't for Tom, you wouldn't be having all these problems.

If I heard a thought like that I'd say, I rebuke you devil, in Jesus name. Get out of here! That's pretty obvious that someone is telling me to go over there and give Tom a piece of my mind. However, I very seldom have thoughts like that. The thoughts come and say, I ought to give Tom a piece of my mind. It is first person singular pronoun... identifying with me.

If I go over there and give Tom a piece of my mind, I'm operating in that principle of sin. Not everything that comes into my mind is me. Second Corinthians 10:4-5 says, The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

If I had a bad thought and wasn't enlightened about this topic, I would condemn myself. I would say, If I was really a good Christian I wouldn't have had a thought like that. Good Christians don't have thoughts about giving someone a piece of their mind.

It was actually the principle of sin that came via my flesh. The devil or a demonic spirit could be attached to it, too. Sometimes I don't know the difference, but that doesn't matter. The answer is still the same - I have to bring those thoughts into obedience to Christ. We're all going to win or lose in the arena of the mind.

The Law of Sin

Do you know how Paul discovered that sin was a law? He tried to do good and he failed. He tried to do good again and he failed. So he tried to be holy again and he failed. He tried to keep the commandments and he failed. Then he decided that this must be a law of sin that works in his members - a law of defeat coming against him.

What is meant by a law? If I were to shoot someone, the police would come and arrest me and take me to jail. They would do that in England, too, and in Russia, or practically anywhere in the world. It's a universal law that if you kill someone you will be arrested and stand trial. A law is consistent. It works the same way all the time. A better example is the law of gravity. The law of gravity applies everywhere. It works the same way all the time and has its own natural power.

Have you lived your Christian life trying to beat a law of sin that seems to have its own power to hold you down? You may say, I'm not going to be defeated. I'm going to get really committed. Then the next Sunday night you have to get recommitted. So every Sunday night you get rededicated. You may think you're not exercising your will enough. Can you live your Christian life that way?

Can you say no to sin and defeat it? You can, but it's like defeating the law of gravity. I can hold an object in my hand and keep it from falling to the floor. For a time, I am defeating the law of gravity. Eventually, my hand and arm will become so tired that I can't hold it any longer. I will drop it because there is a natural power in the law of gravity pulling on my hand.

Many of us have lived our Christian life that way. We may think we'll just exercise more will power against sin. In Romans 7:18 Paul says, For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

There is only one way to beat a law of sin that has a natural force. That way is to put a higher law into operation. The Bible never talks about overcoming sin. The Bible teaches about being freed and delivered from sin (Rom. 6:7, 22) through a power that Paul calls another law. The answer is in Romans 8:2. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath [past tense] made me free from the law of sin and death. He didn't say it works sometimes - it's already done.

Before the Apostle Paul came to this point, he came to a conclusion in Romans 7:24 when he said, Oh wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? If you look up the word wretched in the Greek, it means miserable. Paul says, I am miserable as a believer. Have you ever felt so miserable as a believer that you didn't want to evangelize because you were so miserable? You didn't want to give anyone else the miserable quality of life you were living as a Christian.

In what context is Paul talking about being miserable? He is totally committed. He delights in the law of God. He wants to please God. Verse 15 of Romans, chapter 7, tells us why he is miserable. He says, For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. The good things he wants to do, he doesn't do, and the things he doesn't want to do, he does.

Notice also what verse 21 says: I find then a law [or principle] that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. He didn't say, When I want to do evil, evil is lurking with me. He said, When I want to do good, evil is present with me to defeat me. He is a wretched, miserable believer. This is not the abundant life that Jesus promised. Jesus said, I come that [you] might have life, and that [you] might have it more abundantly (Jn. 10:10).

The key to understanding Romans 7 is the personal pronoun I. The pronoun I is used over and over: I want to do good. I want to keep the commandments. I want to love God. However, the Spirit of God is not in that chapter. Paul is a believer, loving God and committed with all his heart, but he is operating on his own steam and burning out.

The Bible says two seemingly different things about believers. It tells me that I'm an old wretched man and can't do anything. Then it says that I can do all things through Christ. In John 15 Jesus said, I can do all things. There is a balance between these two scriptures. Before you can do all things, you have to get down to Oh wretched man that I am and see that without Him I can do nothing.

USDA Choice Flesh

You may think that you have abilities. Maybe you can sing well or preach well. Having a good ability is a problem, because it's walking in the flesh, if used independently of God. Bill Gillham says in his book, *Lifetime Guarantee*, that you either have yucky flesh or USDA choice flesh. Chances are, if you are a pastor, you have USDA choice flesh. Most of the church members have yucky flesh. Yucky flesh say, Woe is me. I can't do anything. I'll never succeed. The problem with that is that it's a lie. The new creation is expressing itself through the soul and through the body. Romans 8:11 describes the spirit that dwells in us as quickening the mortal body. It's bringing the very life and expression of Jesus to this earth.

I don't know where we get the idea that if you are a good Christian, bad things don't happen to you. Paul said, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. If we read the context, we find that Paul was saying, in essence, I know what it is to be abased. I know what it is to abound. I know what it is to be hungry and I know what it is to be full. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Phil. 4:12-13). He's saying that circumstances of life have nothing to do with one's victory.

In the parables of Jesus, we read that the wind will come and the rains will descend, and it will beat upon the house whether it's on the sand or the rock (Mt. 7:24-27). The difference is that if we're on the rock, we understand who we are in Christ. If we understand the resource that we have and the revelation of what happened to us on the inside, we can face any circumstances. Paul is saying that he is not living his life according to circumstance. He is saying, I can do all things through Christ which infuses strength into me. But, before you get to that point you have to know how weak you are.

It's common for believers to start out depending on Christ, and end up depending on their own ability. It goes something like this: when you come to Jesus you throw yourself on the grace of God. You know you are a sinner and you throw yourself upon the cross and the blood that Jesus shed (Rom. 5-9). Then you get into the church world. The other Christians tell you, If you really want to be a good Christian, then you have to pray an hour a day. You have to read your Bible and do all these other things. These things are good, but people misunderstand them.

Many people think that after ten years of religious instruction and establishing all these laws and avoiding the don'ts and doing the dos that they have arrived. Then suddenly they do something so devastating that they can't even believe it themselves. They may come for help and say, I've been in the ministry so many years and I can't even believe what I've done. I should have been stronger than that.

True Christianity is not you becoming stronger. It's you becoming so weak that you never depend on your own resources (2 Cor. 12:9). You don't depend on your own ability anymore. The good thing about you and me is Christ. Even Paul said that our flesh dwells no good thing. We have to live the Christian life the same way Jesus Christ lived the Christian life. He came to the earth and humbled Himself. He came here from heaven and stripped Himself (Phil. 2:7-8). Jesus said, I live totally dependent on the Father. What I see Him do, I do. What I hear Him speak is what I speak. Without Him I can do nothing (Jn. 5:19, 30; 8:28, 38; 12:49-50; 14:10). Then, Jesus said, You have to live the Christian life that same way - in dependence upon Me (Jn. 15:4-5; Gal. 2:20).

You are saved by grace and you're going to have to live by grace (Col. 2:6). Romans 6:14 says that sin shall not have dominion over you for you are not under the law, but under grace. Under the law you had to rely on your own ability to achieve. But, under grace Jesus says that it's His strength, His ability, made perfect in your weakness.

You can have yucky flesh or you can have USDA choice flesh. USDA choice flesh says, I can handle it. I can think up how to get this ministry going. I can think up how to build my church. You may be good looking, or wealthy, or successful, but God says you have to come to the end of all that (Phil. 3:6-7).

The Answer

Romans 8:5 holds part of the answer. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. The next verse says, For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Andrew Wommack wrote a footnote in his Life for Today commentary that states, Being carnally minded doesn't just tend towards death, it is death (note 15 at Rom. 8:6). The Amplified Bible defines death as all the miseries arising from sin, both here and hereafter. Are you depressed, beaten down, defeated? What are you thinking about?

The flesh will always oppose the Spirit. Galatians 5:17 says the flesh wars against the Spirit. I have to take the Word of God and focus on the God behind the Word to draw His strength. I'm not rejected. God's Word says that I'm loved. I'm not beaten down. I'm above and not beneath.

Your mind has to cooperate with the Spirit. If your mind is not cooperating with the Spirit of God's Word, you're going to walk after the flesh. If you agree with God and set your mind on things above and not on things of this earth, there will be life and peace (Col. 3:1-3; Rom. 8:5).

Many people ask, How do you let Christ live through you? They want to know a formula. After Paul said, Oh wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me? In the next verse he said, I thank God (Rom. 7:24-25). It takes Christ to live the Christian life. My dog and cat can live the Christian life as well as I can. The only difference is that I can tap into the resource of Christ.

People have wonderful experiences in prayer, but we've made a religion out of it. Just pray so long each day and you'll have a wonderful experience with God. They've missed the point. The point isn't the prayer. All our answers are only in Jesus Christ (Col. 2:10). Prayer is not the answer. Prayer is what I use to focus my attention upon Jesus, and that's when I draw His strength.

Some people say the answer is praise and worship. It's not the praise and worship. It's Christ. Praise and worship are ways to direct my attention to Christ, and then I am energized (Ps. 22:3; Ps. 8:2; Mt. 21:16). Some may say the answer is in confessing the Word, but it's focusing on the God behind those words (2 Cor. 3:15-17).

Whatever you have to do to focus your attention on Christ, do it. Just don't ever forget where your strength is. Your trust and dependence must be in Jesus Christ (Gal. 2:20).

JUST ONE GOSPEL (A Look at Ultra-Dispensationalism)

I was told that a man needed a new brain so he went to a salesman who sells brains. The salesman showed him a carpenter's brain and told him it would cause him to be a skilled carpenter. The man then asked how much the brain sold for. The salesman replied, "Forty-five dollars." The salesman then showed him a Christian's brain and the man asked how much it was. "It is fifty-thousand dollars." "Why so much?" the man asked. The salesman replied, "Because it has never been used!"

Sometimes when it comes to the study of the scriptures, we as Christians don't think. Our brains are never used. We need to come to a place in our lives where we begin to think and examine the scriptures for ourselves. We need to get down before God and really ask to be directed and guided in study of His Word.

I am going to discuss some things that you may not have thought about before. I want to discuss dispensations, covenant theology and ultra-dispensationalism. I've been familiar with those different schools of thought to some degree but I would like to lay a somewhat simple foundation for you today. First of all I quote from appendix 2 of the book "Faith Works," "Many people are understandably confused by the term DISPENSATIONALISM. I've met seminary graduates and many in Christian leadership who haven't the slightest idea how to define dispensationalism. How does it differ from covenant theology?" (Faith Works, by John MacArthur Jr., p. 219).

"Dispensationalism is a system of biblical interpretation that sees distinction between God's program for Israel and His dealing with the church" (Ibid. p. 219).

"Dispensations are not periods of TIME, but different ADMINISTRATIONS in the eternal outworking of God's purpose. It is especially crucial to note that the way of salvation - by grace through faith - is the same in every dispensation...Dispensationalism notes that Israel was the focus of God's redemptive plan in one dispensation. The church, consisting of redeemed people including Jews and Gentiles, is the focus in another" (Ibid., p. 219).

"Dispensationalism teaches that all God's remaining covenant promises to Israel will be literally fulfilled - including the promises of earthly blessings and an earthly messianic kingdom. God promised Israel, for example, that they would possess the promised land forever (Gen. 13:14-17; Ex. 32:13). Scripture declares that Messiah will rule over the kingdoms of the earth from Jerusalem (Zech. 14:9-11). Old Testament prophecy says that all Israel will one day be restored to the promised land (Amos 9:14-15); the temple will be rebuilt (Ezek. 37:26-28); and the people of Israel will be redeemed (Jer. 23:6; Rom. 11:26-27). Dispensationalists believe all those promised blessings will come to pass...literally" (Ibid. p. 220).

"Covenant theology, on the other hand, usually views such prophecies as ALREADY fulfilled allegorically (i.e. in principle) or symbolically. Covenant theologians believe that the church, not literal Israel, is the recipient of the covenant promises. They believe the church has superseded Israel in God's eternal program. God's promises to Israel are therefore fulfilled in spiritual blessings realized by Christians. Since their system does not allow for literal fulfillment of promised blessings to the Jewish nation, covenant theologians allegorize or spiritualize those prophetic passages of God's Word" (Ibid. p. 220).

"I am a dispensationalist because dispensationalism generally understands and applies Scripture - particularly prophetic Scripture - in a way that is more consistent with normal, literal approach...For example, dispensationalists can take at face value Zechariah 12-14, Romans 11:25-29, and Revelation 20:1-6. The covenant theologian, on the other hand, cannot" (Ibid. p. 220).

"So I am convinced that the dispensationalist distinction between the church and Israel is an accurate understanding of God's eternal plan..." (Ibid. p. 220).

"I disagree with dispensational extremists who relegate whole sections of Scripture - including the Sermon on the Mount and the Lord's Prayer - to a yet-future kingdom era. I am critical of the way some dispensationalists have handled the preaching and teaching of Jesus in a way that erases the evangelistic intent from some of His most important invitations. I decry the methodology of dispensationalists who want to isolate salvation from repentance, justification from sanctification...in a way that breaks asunder what God has joined together" (Ibid. p. 221).

"Many dispensationalists...agree that there is some continuity between the Old and New Testament people of God in that we share a common salvation purchased by Jesus Christ and appropriated by grace through faith. But dispensationalists do not accept covenant theology's teaching that the church is spiritual Israel" (Ibid. p. 222).

"Admittedly, however, most dispensationalists carry...baggage in their systems..Early dispensationalists often packaged their doctrine in complex and esoteric systems illustrated by intricate diagrams. They loaded their repertoire with extraneous ideas and novel teachings, some of which endure today in various strains of dispensationalism. Dispensationalism's earliest influential spokesman included J.N. Darby, founder of the Plymouth Brethren and considered by many the father of modern dispensationalism, Cyrus I. Scofield, author of the Scofield Reference Bible; Clarence Larkin, whose book of dispensational charts has been in print and selling briskly since 1918; and Ethelbert W. Bullinger, an Anglican clergyman who took dispensationalism to an unprecedented extreme usually called ULTRADISPENSATIONALISM. Many of these men were self taught in theology and were professionals in secular occupations. Darby and Scofield, for example, were attorneys, and Larking was a mechanical draftsman. They were laymen whose teachings gained enormous popularity largely through grass-roots enthusiasm" (Ibid. p. 223).

"Unfortunately some of these early framers of dispensationalism were not as precise or discriminating as they might have been had they had the benefit of a more complete theological education. C.I. Scofield for example, included a note in his reference Bible that contrasted 'legal obedience as the condition of [Old Testament] salvation' with 'acceptance...of Christ' as the

condition of salvation in the current dispensation (The Scofield Reference Bible, p. 1115). Non-dispensationalist critics have often attacked dispensationalism for teaching that the conditions for salvation differ from dispensation to dispensation. Here, at least, Scofield left himself open to that criticism, though he seemed to acknowledge in other contexts that the law was never a means of salvation for Old Testament saints" (Ibid., 93).

"The maturing of dispensationalism...has mainly been a process of refining...clarifying...and cutting away what is extraneous or erroneous. Later dispensationalists, including Donald Grey Barnhouse, Wilbur Smith, Allan MacRae, and H.A. Ironside, were increasingly wary of the fallacies that peppered much early dispensationalist teaching. Ironside's written works show his determination to confront error within the movement. He attacked Bullinger's ULTRADISPENSATIONALISM (Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth, New York: Loizeaux, n.d.). He criticized teaching that made repentance for some other era (Except Ye Repent, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1937)...Ironside's writings are replete with (i.e. full of) warnings against antinomianism" (Faith Works, p. 224). (Antinomianism is taking the teaching of grace and saying we have no responsibility, let's live in lasciviousness that grace may abound [See Jude 1:4]. It actually means without law. It was a term that was developed by Martin Luther in the reformation to those who would take justification by faith to the extreme as they did in Paul's by saying, 'Let us continue in sin that grace may abound' [Rom. 6:1, 15], we have nothing restraining us. That is a false teaching about grace referred to as antinomianism.)

"Many skilled and discerning students of Scripture have embraced dispensationalism and managed to avoid antinomianism, extremism, and other errors" (Ibid. p. 225).

"Some dispensationalists apply 2 Timothy 2:15 (Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH) as if the key word were DIVIDING rather than RIGHTLY...Some dispensationalists teach, for example, that 'kingdom of heaven' and the 'kingdom of God' speak of different domains. The terms are clearly synonymous in Scripture, however, as a comparison of Matthew and Luke shows (Mt. 5:3//Lk. 6:20; Mt. 10:7//Lk. 10:9; Mt. 11:11//Lk. 7:28; Mt. 11:12//Lk. 16:16; Mt. 13:11//Lk. 8:10; Mt. 13:31-33//Lk. 13:18-21; Mt. 18:4//Lk. 18:17; Mt. 19:23//Lk. 18:24). Matthew is the only book in the entire Bible that ever uses the expression 'kingdom of heaven.' Matthew, writing to a mostly Jewish audience, understood their sensitivity to the use of God's name. He simply employed the common euphemism HEAVEN. Thus the kingdom of heaven is the kingdom of God" (Ibid. p. 226). Other tendencies are to sever justification from sanctification, believers from disciples, etc. Paul was offering a different salvation from Jesus. Abuses of dispensationalism teaches that Jesus' gospel of the kingdom had nothing to do with Christians or the Church age. This philosophy has become a tendency to divide and disconnect related ideas. Grace becomes the basis for antinomianism.

"We must start with proper interpretation of Scripture and build our theology from there...Scripture is the only appropriate gauge by which we may ultimately measure the correctness of our doctrine" (Ibid., p. 232-233). In the light of that I want to say that you are going to have to work out in your own heart and mind these things. I have been thinking about this for a couple of years. I came from a totally Pauline prospective. The last 20 years of my life have been spent immersed especially in the book of Romans, Galatians and the Pauline epistles.

The last couple of years I had to wrestle with my own theology when I was confronted face to face with the words of Jesus. Because I have come from a Pauline prospective, everything that I saw was in a Pauline light. Therefore many of the words that the Lord Jesus would speak meant nothing to me. In fact the way I dealt with Christ's words was to basically ignore them. In the last couple of years I have wondered in my own heart and my own understanding, is there really a distinction between Paul and Christ? Was the Apostle Paul preaching the same thing as the Lord Jesus Christ or was the Lord Jesus Christ speaking something different? These are real issues that I have had to wrestle with. I think they are issues today that you yourself may wrestle with. When I was about 15 years old, I was involved with a Bible youth camp that I know today to be ultra-dispensationalists. At that time, I did not know what that was, but the concept of that teaching is basically this: that all of the words of Jesus which are the four gospels, were under the law. Everything that Jesus said was under the law. It only related to the law so therefore we can more or less ignore what Jesus said because he was under the law. The words that Jesus spoke basically don't really apply to us today, so let's leave those sayings alone. It was given to the apostle Paul to understand the mystery. As a result people like Peter, James, John and the 12 apostles didn't really understand the gospel. So therefore, what is done in ultra-dispensational thinking is to cut out the general epistles of Peter, James and John. Jesus was a man under the law, so we are not going to acknowledge the gospels. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, didn't understand grace so we can't put much emphasis on him. Therefore, we must cut out the first portion of the book of Acts because it relates to the ministry of the Apostle Peter.

There are two prominent people in the book of Acts, Peter and Paul. The first major emphasis in the book of Acts is the sermons of the Apostle Peter. Paul gets converted in Acts 9. In Acts 13, Paul is sent out and goes out on his first missionary journey. In Acts, chapter 13 we begin to focus on the Apostle Paul and his message. An ultra-dispensationalist will basically build his theology from about Acts, chapter 13 all the way through the rest of the Pauline letters. They won't say that what Jesus said was not true, but basically they wipe out most of the New Testament and focus on the 13 letters of the Apostle Paul. Because Hebrews may be written by Paul they emphasize this letter also.

I believe that there is a continuity and unity between the entire New Testament. That is my position. I am a dispensationalist, but I am not an ultra-dispensationalist. I believe that there is a distinction between the things that have been spoken to the church and things that were spoken to the nation of Israel. I try in my interpretation to divide those things correctly. But I also believe that there is a continuity in the entire New Testament including the gospels, the words of Jesus, Paul, Acts, James, Peter and John and all of the 12 apostles. Why do I say that? Luke 16:16 makes it plain that the law and the prophets in the Old Testament were until the time of John the Baptist. Since that time there has been only one message, one gospel that has been preached, it is the gospel of the kingdom of God. It was first taught by the Lord Jesus Christ. Mark 1:14-15 states, "Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: Repent ye, and believe the gospel.'" Jesus' gospel was the gospel of God's kingdom. John the baptist said it was close, Jesus says it's here now in the person of Me. Jesus called people to repent, to change their minds and their attitudes, to turn a new direction, to come to Him for the forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and to believe the gospel. That was the preaching of Jesus. Although at this time He was not crucified, the preaching, message and gospel of Jesus are

basically the same except they lacked the redemptive work that He said he was going to do. Jesus began to preach the gospel of the kingdom, He then commissioned 12 apostles to preach that message, and then commissioned 70 others also to preach it as well. As we go into the book of Acts, there is no doubt a continuation of that same message. We can see this very plainly as we go through Acts. As an example, Acts 8:5 states, "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ to them." Verse 12, "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." So the preaching of the kingdom of God is accompanied by the preaching of Jesus Christ redemptive work throughout the book of Acts. The Apostle Paul preaches the same message (Acts 20:24-25; 28:23, 30-31). In his thirteen epistles, Paul also will use the phrase the kingdom of God. "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." Paul is preaching the kingdom of God and it's King, Jesus Christ. In the Jewish mentality the kingdom of God produced the idea of a king...and the territory or people over whom a king rules (Vine's), in the Gentile world the word that was used was Lord. The concept is the same. Lord is a way of saying king and king is a way of saying lord. We also see Peter, James and John talking about the kingdom. John says unless a man is born again he shall not enter the kingdom of God (Jn. 3:3, 5). The kingdom of God is really the preaching and the basis of continuity between all the New Testament. It brings the gospels together, along with Acts, with Paul, with the general epistles, etc. The kingdom of God is the theme that brings unity to the entire teaching of the New Testament. Matthew 24:14 states, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." It's the gospel of the kingdom that Paul preached, that the apostles preached, that Jesus preached, and is going to be preached at the consummation of the end of the age, to all the world. We must ask, is Jesus Christ preaching the same thing as the Apostle Paul? I conclude that he is. Different individuals are going to teach the same message in a different ways because different personalities are expressed. But the message has to be the same.

In Matthew 19:16 a man came to Jesus, the scriptures states, "And behold, one came and said unto him, Good master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" What is this man asking? First of all, let me say that this is an evangelist's dream. This is not somebody trying to pass out a tract. This is not one trying to witness to someone who doesn't want to hear. In the parallel account in Mark 10:17 it states, "...There came one running, and kneeled to Him and asked Him, 'Good Master what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?'" This man was asking the right question. He was asking about eternal life. He was not only asking the right question, he was asking the right person. He asked the person who could tell him how to have eternal life. Eternal life is a term used in the scriptures about 50 times. It's not talking about a quality of time, it's talking about a quality of existence; where a person is alive to God and to the things of God. The Jews saw eternal life as being the hope of life after death. That's what this man was asking. What can I do to get eternal life? Notice Matthew 19:17, "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." Now, here's a man asking how to get eternal life. Instead of answering, Jesus asked him a question. He didn't say to sit down here and pray with me. He said, "I have a question for you, my question is why do you call me good, there is none good but God." I believe that what Jesus is really asking is do you recognize who I really am? That I am the one that can give you eternal life, do you recognize my deity? Then he said something amazing, He said, "If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments." Is that what the Apostle Paul said? That is exactly what the Apostle

Paul said. Romans 2:13 says, "For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified." Paul says it's not just those who hear the law but those who do the law that will be justified, declared righteous in God's sight. Paul is saying the same thing Jesus is saying. Jesus said if you want life, keep the commandments. Paul says if you want life, keep the commandments. Both Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul will then use that statement to their own advantage by showing that there has never been a man who has done it. Why did Paul say in Romans 2:13 that it's not the hearers of the law but the doers that shall be justified? Because he spent the first three chapters of the book of Romans making a statement showing that a man has never and can never do it. The Apostle Paul is going to go on to say that it's the law that will bring the knowledge of sin (Rom. 3:20). It will never make you right before God, therefore by keeping the law no one will ever be justified or be saved. Why? Because the law is not that standard? No! The law is the standard of righteous, holiness and goodness of God, but no man has ever been able to live up perfectly to the standard. Paul's point is the same as Jesus. When Jesus said to the rich young ruler, keep the commandments, He said that because he wanted to point something out to that man that he wasn't aware of. I see this in evangelism outreaches all the time. Whenever I witness to someone I say something similar to this: What do you think you have to do to go to heaven? Almost 80-90 percent of the time I'll get the answer, live a good life, or be the best you can, or keep the ten commandments, or some answer along these lines. I hear that over and over and over. Jesus knew that he was dealing with a self righteous man who had kept the commandments since his youth and he dealt with him in the only way that he could be reached. You see, the Bible says the law isn't made for a righteous man (1 Tim. 1:9-10). It's not made for the born again person. It's made for the unrighteous, the godless. This person thought he was righteous. In Matthew 19:18 the young man asked Jesus which ones of the commandments do I keep and Jesus named five of the ten commandments, thou shalt not murder, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, and honor thy father and thy mother. Then Jesus quoted Leviticus 19:18 that says "love thy neighbor as thyself." In verse 20, the young man says to Jesus "all these things I've kept" (Mt. 19:20). I hear it everyday, "I live by the golden rule, I keep the ten commandments, what do I lack?" Jesus says, "If you then will be perfect I'll tell you what to do: sell what you have, give to the poor and thou shalt have a treasure in heaven, then come and follow me!" What was Jesus saying? He was saying "You've kept the commandments have you? Love your neighbor as yourself, no problem, huh? Well then you are a rich man, take all your possessions and give them to your neighbor. If you love your neighbor just as you love yourself there should be no problem whatsoever in giving everything you have to someone else. If you love them like you say you do, then it's no problem." The man couldn't do it. Why? He had something in his heart and the Apostle Paul said that a covetous man is an idolater. What does that mean? He had another god enthroned. Matthew 19:22-23 says, "But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, 'Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.'" In Mark's account of this story in chapter 10 verse 24, it says any rich man that "trusts" in his riches can't enter the kingdom. Jesus emphasized His point in Mt. 19:24 by saying, "And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." When he says it's harder for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, he wasn't talking about a door over in Palestine where the camel takes off his bags and then he can barely get through. Jesus was trying to make a point. In Matthew and Mark the Greek word for needle used meant a sewing needle. In Luke's account it meant a surgical needle. Jesus said if you can take a camel

and ram him through the eye of a little bitty needle, then a rich man can enter the kingdom. It struck the point with the disciples because verse 25 says they were exceedingly amazed and they asked who then could be saved? Can anyone be saved? What did Jesus say? Verse 26, "And Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, 'With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.' What was Jesus saying? He was saying, I am taking all your self righteousness away. I'm taking all your faith in your own works away. I'm taking all your own ability to keep the law and the commandments away. I am stripping you of everything. I am taking it all away. I will tell you how impossible it is for a man to be saved, for a man to save himself he must be able to take a camel and put it through the eye of a needle. Jesus was saying a man cannot save himself. Salvation is by grace, it's not by man's works or efforts. Jesus says with man it can't be done. Salvation only comes by the grace of God, and can only be done by God. Jesus' point was that salvation is by the grace of God. That's the same point that the Apostle Paul made, it's the same message. Man can't be saved by his own effort, and he can't be saved by the law. He can only be saved through Christ. I want to preach the same thing that Jesus preached, the kingdom of God, repentance, and faith in the gospel. In Acts 20, the Apostle Paul says I declare unto you publicly what I teach: it's the kingdom of God, involving repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (See Acts 20:20-21). It's the very same thing that Jesus Christ himself spoke (Mk. 1:15). It's the same thing that He told the twelve to speak (Mk. 6:12). It's the same He told the seventy to speak (Lk. 10:9, 13). It's the same thing the Apostle Paul says was his message (Acts 20:21, 24-25).

We often forget that when John the Baptist began to preach the kingdom of God (Lk. 16:16), he said not only to repent, but prove by your life that you have repented (Mt. 3:8). The Apostle Paul preached the same thing. In Acts 26:20 Paul says, "...to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance." He was saying that repentance is the change of heart and of mind that causes you to turn and go a new direction. The new lifestyle that comes out of that is not repentance, it's the fruit of repentance. It proves that repentance is in an individual's life.

Then there's the question concerning the Beatitudes. What about the sayings of Jesus? He's saying it's not the ten commandments of don't commit adultery, but I say to you if you lusted after a woman you've broken God's law. It's not the ten commandments of don't murder that is the keeping of God's law, Jesus says, Are you angry? What about those words of Jesus? Can we live up to those words of Jesus? The Bible says the words of God are sharper than a two edged sword (Heb. 4:12). Jesus, when He used words, used them both for the believer and for the unbeliever. When he said to the unbeliever, you think you are good enough to have eternal life by your works, I'm telling you it's not murder, it's anger, have you ever been angry? I'm telling you it's not the act of adultery, it's lust, have you ever lusted? Those words get a man right where it hurts. You can be self righteous and think that you can earn your way to God but when you apply Jesus' words they will do much more than the ten commandments, they will say you are more guilty than you ever thought. The law is a schoolmaster to lead people to Jesus.

In Romans 8:4 Paul states that we aren't to perform the law, but "the righteousness of the law" will be fulfilled in us when we walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. What that does mean is that there is a righteousness (or right way of living) that God wants to produce in us by the power of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16). It is the fruit of the Holy Spirit that God wants in our lives

and it does not contradict the moral teachings of Jesus or the Old Testament. "But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control; and here there is no conflict with Jewish laws" (Gal. 5:22-23, LB).

There is only one gospel. It began to be spoken by the Lord (See Heb. 2:3), it was commissioned to His followers (Mk. 16:15), and it unifies the entire New Testament in its teaching.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Jesus said that the law and the prophets were taught and in effect until the time of John the Baptist. Since that time the message this is to be proclaimed is the Kingdom of God (Lk. 16:16). Jesus also said that the gospel of the Kingdom would be preached in all the world, to all nations, before the end comes (Mt. 24:14). The apostle Paul states that there is only one gospel and it is referred to as the preaching of the Kingdom of God and is used interchangeably with the term the gospel of grace (Acts 20:24-25).

The proclamation of the gospel of the Kingdom was the only gospel preached by Jesus (Mk. 1:14-15), John the Baptist (Lk. 16:16), commissioned to the twelve (Lk. 9:1-6; Mk. 6:7-130), then to the seventy sent out by Christ (Lk. 10:1-12,16), Peter (Acts 2; 2 Pet. 1:10-11), Philip (Acts 8:5-8, 12), the apostle Paul (Acts 14:19-22; 19:8-10; 20:20-27; 28:23-31), James (Jas. 2:5), John (Rev. 1:9; Jn. 3) and all Christians throughout the end of the age (Mt. 24:14).

Within this message is the presentation and appeal to each individual to receive Jesus Christ as their King-Saviour. To receive Jesus Christ the King and His salvation is the only way to be restored to a full relationship and fellowship with God (Acts 4:12). The potential of His Kingdom ruling with us is now possible through the power of His Holy Spirit living within us (Rom. 14:17; Gal. 2:20; Rom. 8:2).

The transference of individuals from satan's authority to Jesus Christ's authority is described as movement from one kingdom unto another (Col. 1:13). The possibility of reinstatement to God's rulership is only possible through the forgiveness of our sins and the full redemption that is offered by the grace of God in Jesus Christ (Col. 1:13-14).

This present world system, also called this present evil age (Gal. 1:4), is under the sway of the wicked one (1 Jn. 5:19). We should be careful not to attribute satan's destructive rule of disorder, sin, confusion, disease and tragedy as being the works of Almighty God.

The announcement of the Kingdom of God was the announcement of God's King, Jesus Christ overthrowing satan's rule and works of darkness (1 Jn. 3:8). Jesus' rule is the offer of life and deliverance from the flesh and satan's rule (Rom. 6:16-19; Gal. 5:16). Jesus' ultimate victory

over sin, demonic forces, and satan's right to rule men, was accomplished at the cross (Col. 2:13-15). It was Jesus' death and resurrection that is the sole foundation of a full reinstatement of relationship with God and rulership under Him (Col. 1:13-14).

The sermon on the mount outlines some of the foundational characteristics of individuals who are willing to receive his rule and the Kingdom He brings (Mt. 5-7). Nine times in this teaching the "kingdom" is mentioned (Mt. 5:3, 10, 19, 20; 6:10, 13, 33; 7:21). Christ's rule calls for humility (Mt. 5:3), willing to suffer for righteousness' sake (Mt. 5:10), the teaching and practicing of God's commands (Mt. 5:19), a life of prayer (Mt. 6:9), the willingness to forgive others (Mt. 6:14-15), the seeking first of eternal values over temporal things (Mt. 6:33), and submission to Christ's Lordship in deeds, not in just words (Mt. 7:21).

Because the apostle Paul's ministry was primarily to the Gentiles, Paul substituted the word "king" with its Gentile equivalent "Lord" in speaking of Christ's Kingdom. In the Roman Gentile world "king" was not used but "Lord" was. "Lord" carried the idea of Deity, as well as one having maximum authority, the boss. Unbelievers confessed Caesar as Lord, while Christians took their stand for Jesus as Lord. This caused great persecution for many Christians under Roman rule.

Although God's Kingdom is now in spiritual form, manifesting power to those who have been born again and received a new heart (Ezek. 36:26; Lk. 8:15). There will be a future coming of the Kingdom of God at the end of this age (Mt. 6:10; Acts 1:6).

In the New Testament, satan's kingdom stands over and against God's Kingdom (Col. 1:13). The kingdoms of this age are being controlled by satan's deception (Mt. 4:8; Lk. 4:5). The opposition between the two kingdoms, satan's and God's is acknowledged in 2 Cor. 4:4, as satan is seen to rule by holding men in spiritual darkness away from the light of the gospel.

Jesus' commission to His disciples was to preach the gospel of His Kingdom (Lk. 9:1-2), cast out demons and overthrow satan's power (Lk. 10:18), thus calling men through repentance and faith, into a new rule and deliverance from the power of darkness. John's gospel calls this a new birth (Jn. 3:3, 5), Paul a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17, Ezekiel a new heart and spirit (Ezek. 36:26). It brings men righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17).

In Jesus' preaching He invited everyone to enter His Kingdom by opening their lives to God's rule (Mk. 1:15). The church is the fellowship of those accepting Christ's offer of salvation and submitting to His rule (Mt. 7:21-23).

Vine's Expository Dictionary states the Greek word for "kingdom" (basileia) denotes "the territory or people over whom a king rules ... the Kingdom of God is the sphere of God's rule ... but since the earth is the scene of universal rebellion against God, the Kingdom of God is the sphere in which, at any given time, His rule is acknowledged ... Henceforth God calls upon men everywhere, without distinction of race or nationality, to submit voluntarily to His rule ... that a man is of the Kingdom of God is not shown in the punctilious observance of ordinances, which are external and material, but in the deeper matters of the heart, which are spiritual and essential,

'righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit' - Rom. 14:17, (from notes on Thessalonians by Hogg and Vine, pp. 68-70).

The advancement of God's Kingdom is a direct result of it's preaching (Lk. 16:16; Acts 10:22; 11:14).

As proof that the Kingdom of God, the person and work of the King-Saviour is the only gospel message to be preached in the New Testament, consider the following verses:

JOHN THE BAPTIST

The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. **SINCE THAT TIME, THE GOOD NEWS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS BEING PREACHED**, and everyone is forcing his way into it. Lk.16:16 NIV

Then said Paul, John....[said] unto the people, that they should believe on Him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. Acts 19:4

JESUS

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God;

Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, **PREACHING THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD**,

And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel. Mk. 1:1, 14-15

To whom also He shewed Himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. Acts 1:3

THE TWELVE

Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases.

And HE SENT THEM TO PREACH THE KINGDOM OF GOD, and to heal the sick.

And he said unto them, Take nothing for the journey-- no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra tunic.

Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town.

And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them.

And they departed, and went through the towns, PREACHING THE GOSPEL, and healing every where. Luke 9:1-6 KJV; NIV

And he called [unto him] the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits;

And commanded them that they should take nothing for the journey except a staff-- no bread, no bag, no money in your belts.

But [be] shod with sandals; and not put on two coats.

Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town.

And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave, as a testimony against them.

And they went out, and PREACHED THAT MEN SHOULD REPENT.

And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed [them]. Mark 6:7-13 KJV; NIV

A CERTAIN DISCIPLE

He said to another man, Follow me. But the man replied, Lord, first let me go and bury my father.

Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: BUT GO THOU AND PREACH THE KINGDOM OF GOD. Luke 9:59-60 NIV; KJV

THE SEVENTY

After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.

He told them, The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.

Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.

Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.

When you enter a house, first say, Peace to this house.

If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you.

Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.

When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you.

And heal the sick that are therein, AND SAY UNTO THEM, THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS COME NIGH UNTO YOU.

But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say,

Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be sure of this, THAT THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS COME NIGH UNTO YOU.

But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city.

He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me. Luke 10:1-12,16 NIV; KJV

PHILIP

Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and **PREACHED CHRIST** unto them.

And the people with one accord **GAVE HEED UNTO THOSE THINGS WHICH PHILIP SPAKE**, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.

For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed [with them]: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed.

And there was great joy in that city.

But when they believed Philip **PREACHING THE THINGS CONCERNING THE KINGDOM OF GOD, AND THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST**, they were baptized, both men and women. Acts 8:5-8, 12

THE APOSTLE PAUL

And there came thither [certain] Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew [him] out of the city, supposing he had been dead.

Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

And when they had **PREACHED THE GOSPEL** to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and [to] Iconium, and Antioch,

Confirming the souls [i.e. strengthening the disciples] of the disciples, [and] exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that **WE MUST THROUGH MUCH TRIBULATION ENTER INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD**. Acts 14:19-22

And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, **DISPUTING AND PERSUADING THE THINGS CONCERNING THE KINGDOM OF GOD**.

But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.

And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia HEARD THE WORD OF THE LORD JESUS, both Jews and Greeks. Acts 19:8-10

But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to TESTIFY THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD.

And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone PREACHING THE KINGDOM OF GOD, shall see my face no more. Acts 20:24-25

And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into [his] lodging; to whom HE EXPOUNDED AND TESTIFIED THE KINGDOM OF GOD, PERSUADING THEM CONCERNING JESUS, both out of the law of Moses, and [out of] the prophets, from morning till evening.

And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.

And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers,

Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive:

For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.

Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles and [that] they will hear it.

And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves.

And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him,

PREACHING THE KINGDOM OF GOD, AND TEACHING THOSE THINGS WHICH CONCERN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, with all confidence, no man forbidding him. Acts 28:23-31

JAMES

Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and HEIRS OF THE KINGDOM WHICH HE HATH PROMISED TO THEM THAT LOVE HIM?
James 2:5

PETER

Therefore, my brother, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall,

and you will receive a rich welcome into THE ETERNAL KINGDOM OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST. 2 Pet. 1:10-11 NIV

JOHN

I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and IN THE KINGDOM AND PATIENCE OF JESUS CHRIST, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. Rev. 1:9 (See also Jn. 3.)

ALL CHRISTIANS THROUGHOUT THE END OF THE AGE

And this GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM SHALL BE PREACHED IN ALL THE WORLD for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

Mt. 24:14

PRAYER, REPENTANCE & SALVATION

"What the Lord Spoke to me, Evangelist James Brand, in the Philippines in 1982."

God called me as an evangelist in 1962 and I have been walking in that calling ever since. I have witnessed and ministered the gospel in America, Asia, and particularly Taiwan, Hong Kong, China, and the Philippines. This includes pastoring and radio ministry. During all this time the Lord has given me a vision and revealed to me that there is a serious problem worldwide in evangelism regarding the manner of leading the lost to pray.

The Lord spoke to me in 1982 while in Manila seeking Him earnestly regarding why people, during an altar-call, would often try to repeat my words in prayer as tho they were their own and then they seemed to expect me to lead them in reciting or repeating "personal prayer for salvation." It was then that the Holy Ghost spoke to me so very clearly, "TEACH THESE PEOPLE TO PRAY, NOT TO REPEAT AFTER ANY MAN A FORM OF PRAYER OR SIMPLY RECITE THEIR WORDS!" This came as a great revelation regarding a serious error in the church and most especially in the area of evangelism. Prayer and crying out to God for forgiveness and salvation is to be spontaneous and completely FROM THE HEART, not a matter of a minister or an evangelist putting words in the mouth of the one seeking the Lord for mercy and salvation. This is very, very crucial. One seeking to repent and be saved should not be taught to parrot the words of another, THEY MUST CRY OUT TO GOD FOR THEMSELVES FROM THE HEART, LEST THEIR PRAYING BE A MERE PRETENSE, A RITUAL, A SORT OF CASUAL REPEATING OF "A SINNER'S PRAYER" THAT IS THE FORM AND PRAYER OF ANOTHER AND NOT TRULY THEIR OWN. This is a revelation from the Lord and it is in complete agreement with His Word.

At this point, let us consider carefully what the Holy Bible teaches and illustrates regarding prayer and repentance unto salvation.

We have four prime examples from the Bible that illustrate very clearly how a repentant sinner prayed and was justified in the sight of God. The first is found in Luke 18:9-14. In this parable from our Lord, the Pharisee stood and prayed a kind of casual, self-righteous prayer that did nothing to touch the heart of God. But the publican we read in verse 13, "standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." In the very next verse our Lord tells us that it is this man who went down to his house justified before God and not the other. The reason? One humbled himself and confessed and prayed FROM THE HEART, while the other did not.

Let us consider next the two thieves on the cross who made their confession before Christ on Calvary. We find in Luke, chapter 23, beginning with verse 39, that one of the thieves railed at Jesus and challenged Him, saying, "If thou be Christ save thyself and us." But immediately the other thief rebuked this railing accusation against our Lord and boldly declared, "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? For we indeed are justly condemned; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing wrong." Then he turned and said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise."

Did you notice that in both of these instances it was a completely spontaneous confession: no one was putting words in their mouth. No one TOLD THEM what to say. They sought God from their heart and He heard them in their own words and in their own way. There was no rote or ritual or repeating, only a heartfelt cry unto the Lord for mercy and forgiveness. -- This is what God responds to.

A very clear instruction is found from God in Jeremiah 29:12-14a. In this passage the Lord exhorts those who would seek Him, "Then shall ye call upon Me, and ye shall go and pray unto Me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek Me, and find Me, WHEN YE SHALL SEARCH FOR ME WITH ALL YOUR HEART. And I will be found of you saith the Lord: and I will turn away your captivity." Please understand that this DOES NOT SAY, "I shall be found of you if you just repeat this sinner's prayer after the minister or evangelist!" No! He said WHEN YOU SEEK ME WITH ALL OF YOUR HEART! GOD WANTS TO HEAR OUR OWN HEARTFELT PRAYER AND CONFESSION, not something someone else puts in our mouth to help us out or make it easier. THERE MUST BE REAL CONVICTION BEFORE CONVERSION, AND OUR CONFESSION MUST BE WITH REAL HUMILITY AND WITH A SPONTANEOUS AND HEARTFELT PRAYER.

What does the Bible say about conviction and godly sorrow that brings repentance unto salvation? Paul, in 2 Corinthians 7:10-11, spoke of a "godly sorrow that worketh repentance unto salvation that is not to be repented of." That is, unless there is a godly sorrow and conviction over sin, there is no real repentance leading to forgiveness and salvation. It's that simple. A mere rote repeating of words or ritual will not do it. ONE MUST SEEK GOD WITH ALL OF THEIR HEART, ONE MUST HAVE GODLY SORROW OVER SIN LEADING TO REPENTANCE, AND MUST CRY OUT TO GOD IN RIGHT EARNEST FROM THE HEART TO RECEIVE SALVATION, OTHERWISE IT'S JUST A RELIGIOUS FORM OR A PRETENSE THAT GOD WILL NOT HONOR. "The LORD looketh upon the heart." Therefore, your prayer to Him must be from the heart, not words put in your mouth from another.

Let us read through a few more important scriptures that touch on this vital area of prayer and seeking God acceptably:

"We then, as workers together with Christ, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I helped thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation) [2 Cor. 6:1-2].

"Seek ye the LORD while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" [Isaiah 55:6-7].

"The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit" [Psalm 34:18].

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine

iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. FOR I ACKNOWLEDGE MY TRANSGRESSIONS: AND MY SIN IS EVER BEFORE ME. AGAINST THEE AND THEE ONLY HAVE I SINNED, AND DONE THIS EVIL IN THY SIGHT...

CREATE IN ME A CLEAN HEART, O GOD, AND RENEW A RIGHT SPIRIT WITHIN ME.

THE SACRIFICES OF GOD ARE A BROKEN SPIRIT: A BROKEN AND A CONTRITE HEART, OF GOD, THOU WILT NOT DESPISE" [Psalm 51:1-4a, 10, 17].

"Blessed are they that keep His testimonies, and THAT SEEK HIM WITH THE WHOLE HEART" [Psalm 119:2].

Many other scriptures could be given because the Word of God is full of this truth: WE MUST SEEK THE LORD FOR OURSELF AND FROM THE HEART, NOTHING LESS WILL DO; NOTHING LESS WILL HONOR GOD AND BRING THE PEACE OF GOD AND THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

In our third illustration from the Bible we find that David was confronted with his sin by the Prophet Nathan, not only publically but even in the King's own court. In 2 Samuel 12:13, we see that David openly acknowledged his sin and repented before the Lord and the people. No one TOLD him what to say; it is clear he prayed and sought the Lord in his own words and with a humble and broken heart. The prayer quoted above from Psalm 51 is well known throughout the world as David's prayer of repentance. It is a beautiful prayer and a model prayer of the repentant heart, but God does not want us simply reading or reciting this prayer either as tho it were our own confession and prayer before the Lord. Again I must emphasize THE LORD WANTS EACH PERSON TO CONFESS AND PRAY BEFORE HIM IN THEIR OWN WORDS AND FROM THEIR OWN HEART WITHOUT TRYING TO TAKE SOMEONE ELSE'S WORDS OR PRAYER AS THEIR OWN. This is absolutely essential and crucial. One of the main reasons so many of our churches are full of unconverted, unsanctified, and uncommitted "Christians" is that many of these people may have recited "a sinner's prayer" once or twice or even many, many times over and over again, BUT THEY HAVE NOT PRAYED THRU FROM THE HEART AND IN THEIR OWN WORDS THAT THEY MIGHT TRULY REPENT AND TRULY BE SAVED. What could be more tragic than that?

Am I exaggerating? No sir, I am not exaggerating at all. There's an old proverb and I think we've all heard it: "You can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink." Well, let me say "You can lead a sinner to the Living Waters, but you're way out of line if you dunk his head in the river and try to make him drink!" As ministers and evangelists we can preach the gospel and plead with the lost and allow the Holy Ghost to convict of sin and righteousness and of coming judgment, BUT WE CAN ONLY LEAD THEM TO THE FOOT OF CALVARY. THEY MUST PLEAD AND SEEK AND PRAY AND REPENT BEFORE GOD IN THEIR OWN WORDS AND FROM THEIR OWN HEART...IT IS WRONG, WRONG, WRONG FOR US TO TRY TO PUT THE WORDS IN THEIR MOUTH AND MAKE IT ALMOST A ROTE PARROTING OF PRAYER RATHER THAN URGE AND EXHORT THEM TO SEEK GOD OF THEIR OWN UNTIL THEY BREAKTHROUGH INTO A PLACE OF MERCY, GRACE, AND

PEACE. LET PEOPLE GET DOWN ON THEIR FACE BEFORE GOD AND STAY THERE UNTIL THEY'VE STRUGGLED THROUGH WITH SIN AND REPENTANCE AND MAKING IT RIGHT WITH CHRIST AS THEIR PERSONAL SAVIOR AND LORD. ANY THING LESS THAN THIS AND PEOPLE GO AWAY EMPTY AND UNCHANGED. People must prove they mean business with GOD before He'll do business with them. No more religious games or any of this casual, pretense of prayer. Let's get real before God and do it the way the Bible clearly teaches by precept and example.

Finally, our last illustration from scripture is that of the Prodigal who returned to the Father when he came to the end of himself and saw his true spiritual condition. At this realization he makes a confession and the ACTS UPON that confession. In Luke 15, verses 18 & 19 we read: "I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and I am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants." -- There was the confession. In the very next verse we read, "AND HE AROSE, AND CAME TO HIS FATHER..." --There was the act of repentance and returning to SERVE God our Heavenly Father. You search the Bible from Genesis to Revelation: THERE IS NOT ONE SINGLE INSTANCE OF A SINNER REPEATING A PRAYER LED WORD-BY-WORD BY ANOTHER. NOT ONE. IN EVERY INSTANCE YOU WILL FIND SPONTANEOUS, INDIVIDUAL, HEARTFELT PRAYER THAT SEEKS OUT AND SEARCHES OUT GOD'S MERCY AND FORGIVENESS. Think about that. And if you need to : change your ways.

Please pray about what I have shared with you here. I know the Lord has spoken to me about this problem. I pray that He speaks to you by His Spirit and thru His Word. God bless you.

"But what saith it? the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach;

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

For WITH THE HEART man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" [Romans 10:8-10].

WHAT IS REPENTANCE?

Repentance is a gift that God grants people who want to come to Him and be saved. It is a new attitude, a change of mind, a change of heart THAT RESULTS in one turning from sin, to God and ultimately to His ways.

In Matthew 3:8 John the Baptist said, "Bring forth fruit that is consistent with repentance [let your lives prove your change of heart]" (Amplified Bible). And the apostle Paul said in his preaching to the Gentiles "that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate

to repentance" (Acts 26:20; NASV). From these scriptures we can see that "repentance" is "a change of heart, a change of mind" and that good works are the FRUIT of that changed heart.

"Vine's Expository Dictionary" states that "repentance" (Gk. METANOEO) "signifies to change one's mind or purpose, always, in the New Testament, except in Luke 17:3, 4, of repentance from sin" (p. 952). It further states, "In the New Testament the subject chiefly has reference to repentance from sin, and this change of mind involves both a turning from sin and a turning to God. The parable of the prodigal son is an outstanding illustration of this. Christ began His ministry with a call to repentance, Matt. 4:17, but the call is addressed, not as in the Old Testament to the nation, BUT TO THE INDIVIDUAL" (p. 953).

The "Expository Dictionary of Bible Words" states, "The Old Testament word that expresses the biblical concept of repentance is SUB. This verb is found over a thousand times in the Old Testament...in the 164 uses of this word in a covenant context, it indicates turning from evil to God, from evil ways to God's ways, or from God to idols. SUB is that commitment to a faith and way of life that involves turning from a previous way, and this is to `repent.' ...repentance itself, as it is illustrated in the Old Testament, is essentially the `about face' of a new commitment" (p. 522).

"In the New Testament, METANOEO and METANOIA are used in the same way as SUB in the Old Testament - to emphasize a change of mind and attitude. To repent is to make a decision that changes the total direction of one's life" (Ibid., p. 522).

"Repentance in both the Old Testament and the New Testament provides a perspective on faith. For faith in a biblical sense is commitment, not merely `belief about.' One who repents has faith, for it is faith in God that is expressed when we carry out a decision to turn from our old ways and to commit ourselves to God's ways" (Ibid., p. 522).

"The New International Dictionary of N.T. Theology" states, "Repentance is no longer obedience to a law but to a PERSON. The call to repentance becomes a call to discipleship. So repentance, faith and discipleship are different aspects of the same thing" (Vol. 1, p. 358).

"There are many passages in which the term METANOEO does not appear, but in which the thought of repentance is clearly present. Examples are: `Unless you TURN and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven' (Matt. 18:3). `So therefore, whoever of you does not FORSAKE all that he has cannot be my disciple' (Lk. 14:33). It is the spiritually poor, the little ones and the helpless, who receive the promise of the Kingdom of God (Mt. 5:3; 18:10, 14)" (Ibid., Vol.1, p. 358).

"The early Christian preaching continued the call for repentance (See Mk. 6:12 and the sermons in Acts). This early preaching linked repentance with, the call to faith (Acts 20:21), the demand to be baptized (Acts 2:38), the promise of the forgiveness of sins (Lk. 24:47), and salvation (Acts 11:18). Conversion is turning from evil (Acts 8:22; Rev. 2:21) to God (Acts 26:20). In Acts 3:19 and Acts 26:20 METANOEO (repentance) and EPISTREPHO (conversion) are placed side by side. This shows that the two concepts are related. The fact that this group of words does not occur often in the Pauline writings (6 times) and not at all in the Johannine (apart

from Revelation), does not mean that the idea of conversion is not present...Both Paul and John convey the idea of conversion (turning) by that of faith. Paul speaks of faith as 'being in Christ,' as the 'NEW CREATION,' as 'PUTTING ON THE NEW MAN,' as the 'DYING AND RISING OF A MAN WITH CHRIST.' The Johannine literature represents the new life in Christ as the 'NEW BIRTH,' as the passing from DEATH TO LIFE and from DARKNESS TO LIGHT" (Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 359).

From these statements we see that in the call to conversion that sometimes the word "repent" is only used. At other times the word "believe" is only used. At still other times they are both used together (Acts 20:21). But both words involve a change of heart towards God. Repentance is the first response of man to the gospel that is demanded by God. It must always accompany true faith. Without repentance, faith alone as described in James 2, would be dead faith, that is, mental assent that cannot save.

REPENTANCE DEFINED

Again, as already stated, repentance in the New Testament denotes an inner decision, a change of heart, a change of mind. The Old Testament word denotes an outward action of turning back or turning around. By putting the two together we see that repentance involves a change of heart, a change of mind that results in a turning around to move in a completely new direction. This change of direction can be summed up by the words of Jesus, "FOLLOW ME!" (Mt. 4:19; 8:22; 9:9; 16:24; 19:21; Mk. 2:14; 8:34; 10:21; Lk. 5:27; 9:23, 59; 18:22; Jn. 1:43; 10:27; 12:26; 21:19). "Follow" means to come or go after; move behind and in the same direction; to come or go with; to accept the guidance or leadership of; to adhere to the cause or principles of; to be governed by; obey; and comply with.

AN EXAMPLE

The prodigal son of Luke 15:11-32 is a good example of repentance. He had turned his back on his father and his home to waste his life in sin and riotous living. Eventually he came to himself and made a decision to arise and go back to his father and home. He first had the change of heart, he then acted by carrying out his decision. He returned to father and home acknowledging, "Father I have sinned!"

In our sinful condition we have all turned our back upon God our Father and heaven our home. We must stop, and have a change our mind, a change of heart, a change of direction. This essential act is called "repentance" and is the first move we must make to be reconciled to God.

REPENTANCE IS NOT AN EMOTION

Concerning Esau, Hebrews 12:17 states, "...he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully WITH TEARS." This is evidence that strong emotion is not necessarily proof of repentance. Many people because of a strong sales approach, respond to a gospel call but never come to the change of heart, and change of mind that is necessary to receive God's salvation. Shedding a tear sometimes indicates a person is sorry they were caught in a situation, but they may never have had a change of mind towards their actions.

REPENTANCE BEGINS WITH GOD

Scriptural repentance begins with God, not with man. John 6:44 states, "No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him..." (Jn. 6:44). For this reason the supreme crisis of every human being comes at the moment of the Spirit's drawing to repentance. When a person says, "Yes" to that drawing it will lead to saving faith. If rejected it will leave a person to continue in his own sinful way. That's why the scripture states, "To day if you will hear His voice, Harden not your hearts..." (Heb. 3:8). And again, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation..." (Heb. 2:3). Apart from God's grace and the drawing of His Spirit, man left to himself is incapable of repentance. But when the Spirit is drawing through the ministry of the gospel, it is a necessity that man respond then. To have the attitude that the thief on the cross waited till the last moment and I can wait may have the most serious consequences.

REPENTANCE IS FROM DEAD WORKS

In Hebrews 6:1 repentance is from dead works. In Acts 20:21 it is toward God. John Calvin once said that we must turn from our works as well as from our sins and flee to Christ for his mercy and pardon. In Isaiah 64:6 it says that "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." There is no reference here to sin but only to our own righteousness as a means of trying to justify ourselves.

REPENTANCE IS MADE COMPLETE BY MAN'S RESPONSE

Although repentance is initiated by God it is made complete by man's response. For this reason God's decree is that "all men everywhere must repent" (Acts 17:30). All scripture is absolutely unanimous on this point, "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Lk. 13:3, 5). Consider these messages from the scriptures themselves:

REPENTANCE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and **TURN FROM THEIR WICKED WAYS**; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (2 Chr. 7:14).

"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but **WHOSO CONFESSETH AND FORSAKETH THEM SHALL HAVE MERCY**" (Prov. 28:13).

"Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord **GOD; REPENT, AND TURN YOURSELVES FROM YOUR IDOLS; AND TURN AWAY YOUR FACES FROM ALL YOUR ABOMINATIONS:**" (Ezek. 14:6).

"Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord **GOD: and not that he should RETURN FROM HIS WAYS, AND LIVE?**

Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord **GOD. REPENT, AND TURN YOURSELVES FROM ALL YOUR TRANSGRESSIONS;** so iniquity shall not be your ruin" (Ezek. 18:23, 30).

"Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord **GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked TURN FROM HIS WAY AND LIVE:** turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (Ezek. 33:11).

"Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and **BREAK OFF THY SINS BY RIGHTEOUSNESS,** and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; it may be lengthening of thy tranquillity" (Dan. 4:27).

"Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the **LORD of hosts; TURN YE UNTO ME,** saith the **LORD of hosts, and I WILL TURN UNTO YOU,** saith the **LORD of hosts**" (Zec. 1:3).

REPENTANCE IN THE GOSPELS

"But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring for therefore **FRUITS MEET FOR REPENTANCE**" (Mt. 3:7-8).

"And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, **Follow Me.** And he arose, and followed him.

And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples.

And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, **Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?**

But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, **They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.**

But go ye and learn what that meaneth, **I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but SINNERS TO REPENTANCE**" (Mt. 9:9-13).

"And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed Him.

And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, **How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?**

When Jesus heard it, He saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but SINNERS TO REPENTANCE" (Mk. 2:15-17).

"And they went out, and PREACHED THAT MEN SHOULD REPENT" (Mk. 6:12).

"There were present at that season some that told Him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things?

I tell you, Nay: but, EXCEPT YE REPENT, YE SHALL ALL LIKEWISE PERISH.

Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?

I tell you, Nay: but, EXCEPT YE REPENT, YE SHALL ALL LIKEWISE PERISH" (Lk. 13:1-5).

"What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

I say unto you, that likewise JOY SHALL BE IN HEAVEN OVER ONE SINNER THAT REPENTETH, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance" (Lk. 15:4-7).

"Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it?

And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost.

Likewise, I say unto you, THERE IS JOY IN THE PRESENCE OF THE ANGELS OF GOD OVER ONE SINNER THAT REPENTETH" (Lk. 15:8-10).

"Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but IF ONE WENT UNTO THEM FROM THE DEAD, THEY WILL REPENT" (Lk. 16:29-30).

"And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:

And that REPENTANCE AND REMISSION OF SINS SHOULD BE PREACHED IN HIS NAME AMONG ALL NATIONS, beginning at Jerusalem" (Lk. 24:46-47).

REPENTANCE IN ACTS

"REPENT YE THEREFORE, AND BE CONVERTED, THAT YOUR SINS MAY BE BLOTTED OUT, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19).

"The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.

Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give REPENTANCE TO ISRAEL, AND FORGIVENESS OF SINS" (Acts 5:30-31).

"Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.

REPENT THEREFORE OF THIS THY WICKEDNESS, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee" (Acts 8:21-22).

"Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as He did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?

When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted REPENTANCE UNTO LIFE" (Acts 11:17-18).

"Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.

And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but NOW COMMANDETH ALL MEN EVERY WHERE TO REPENT:

Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead" (Acts 17:29-31).

"And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house,

Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, REPENTANCE TOWARD GOD, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:20-21).

"Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and TO TURN them FROM darkness TO light, and FROM the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive FORGIVENESS OF SINS, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:

But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should REPENT AND TURN TO GOD, and do works meet for repentance" (Acts 26:17-20).

"First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should REPENT AND TURN TO GOD AND PROVE THEIR REPENTANCE BY THEIR DEEDS" (Acts 26:20; NIV).

REPENTANCE IN PAUL'S LETTERS

"And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them who do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?

Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the GOODNESS OF GOD LEADETH THEE TO REPENTANCE?

But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;

Who will render to every man according to his deeds:

To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:

But to them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,

Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Greek;

But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek:

For there is no respect of persons with God" (Rom. 2:3-11).

"And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have NOT REPENTED OF THE UNCLEANNESS AND FORNICATION AND LASCIVIOUSNESS which they have committed" (2 Cor. 12:21).

"The Lord's message rang out from you not only in macedonia and Achaia-- your faith in God has been known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you TURNED TO GOD FROM IDOLS to serve the living and true God" (1 Th. 1:8-9; NIV).

"And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if GOD peradventure will give them REPENTANCE TO THE ACKNOWLEDGING OF THE TRUTH;

And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will" (2 Tim. 2:24-26).

"Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of REPENTANCE FROM DEAD WORKS, and of faith toward God" (Heb. 6:1).

REPENTANCE IN PETER'S LETTERS

"The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, NOT WANTING ANY TO PERISH, BUT ALL TO COME TO REPENTANCE" (NRSV).

REPENTANCE IN JOHN'S LETTERS

"I have GIVEN HER TIME TO REPENT of her immorality, but she is unwilling.

So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, UNLESS THEY REPENT OF HER WAYS" (NIV).

CHRISTIAN WATER BAPTISM

As we come to the teaching on Christian water baptism it is of utmost importance that we be honest with ALL scriptures, asking God to give us light and then to make a quality decision to act upon that light (James 1:22).

Because of religion, tradition and doctrines of men that make the Word of God of none effect (Mt. 15:3, 6-8; Mk. 7:8-9, 13; Col. 2:8) such questions as these have been asked, "Well my grandfather wasn't baptized, Will he go to heaven?" or "Baptism is salvation by works isn't it?" Such questions would never have been asked of the early New Testament church. The reason that such questions would not be valid is because all New Testament believers were immediately baptized as they put their faith in Jesus as Lord, Messiah and Saviour. All the apostles and

disciples immediately baptized their converts never questioning it as being a work of the law. This is also true of the apostle Paul who establishes the fact of salvation by grace through faith without works (Acts 19:4-5).

These questions have only been asked because we have not practiced New Testament Christianity. The practice of many Christians today is "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" and when it is convenient and we can get enough people together we will have a baptismal service and then later on as you grow in the Lord, there is another experience we will tell you about called the baptism with the Holy Spirit. In the early New Testament church there was not time period between these experiences, at the most, a time period of a few days and in most cases not even a period of hours.

Because of the lack of practicing New Testament Christianity, and the practice of our own traditions that God is calling the church to again act upon the gospel as did the early New Testament church.

Look at New Testament Christianity and then compare it to the practice of the church today:

Mark 16:15-16	Acts 8:35-38	Acts 16:14-15
Acts 2:36-41	Acts 9:3-6; 17-18 cp.22:12-16	Acts 16:30-34
Acts 8:5, 12, 14-15	Acts 10:43-48	Acts 19:1-6

It is because of a dishonest approach to the scriptures that denominations have built churches based on one scripture such as Acts 2:38 while others have built churches on Acts 10:43. To get the whole truth on any subject we must acknowledge and approach all of God's Word on that subject. Comparing scripture with scripture we must be willing to believe and act upon God's Word and understanding will come. "For man shall not live by bread alone but by every word which proceeds from God" (Mt. 4:4). Men fall into heresy when they begin to choose which scriptures they would like to believe. The word heresy comes from a root word which means "to take" or "choose."

Upon examination of the word "baptize" we find it is not actually an English word, but a Greek word written in letters of the English alphabet. If we write out the Greek in English letters, this gives us "baptizo." Then with a change of the "o" to an "e," we have the word "baptize."

In Strong's Exhaustive Concordance we see the primary meaning of the word "baptizo," "to make fully wet." Strong's gives the meaning of the verb "bapto" as "to cover wholly with fluid, hence to dip."

We have here the idea of baptism by immersion. If we do not trust the Greek as our final authority, let us go to the scripture themselves to settle this all important question.

Please read Matthew 3:16, Acts 8:38, and Romans 6:4. (A burial is not placing a corpse on top of the ground and sprinkling some dirt on it. It is placing it in the ground.)

As we study such words as "baptize" it will lead us to examine other subjects such as "remission." Acts 2:23 states repentance and Christian water baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus for the remission of sins. Upon examination of the word "remission" we also see that Acts 10:43 states that "whosoever believeth in Him (Lord Jesus) shall receive remission of sins. It is with an equal approach that we must acknowledge both of these scriptures as being God's holy Word to us. As a study of the subject of "remission" is done, we find that there could be no remission under any circumstances "without the shedding of blood" (Heb. 9:22). John Baptist's baptism of repentance could only be a temporary baptism based on the shedding of blood of bulls and goats (Heb. 10:1, 4). When the apostle Paul had discovered that certain disciples at Ephesus had only received John's baptism he immediately re-baptized them with Christian water baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 19:1-5). It is only the blood of Jesus that can give remission of sins on a permanent basis (Heb. 10:16-19).

As an objection that Christian water baptism is "works" we are led to examine the subject of works. The apostle Paul establishes the fact "that a man is not justified (declared righteous) by works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 2:16). But what are the works of the law? Read Philippians 3:9. The works of the law are anything that you do to establish your own righteousness before God, saying, "Lord I've done these righteous deeds, I deserve now to enter your Kingdom." Read Romans 10:3-4 very carefully.

As we study the subject of "works" we discover another kind of "work" that must be present with saving faith. It is called "a work of faith." Read 1 Th. 1:2-3; 2 Th. 1:11. John Calvin said, "Faith alone saves but saving faith is not alone." A work of faith is a corresponding action that results from faith. If I said, "This building is on fire!" it would produce a work of faith, an action which would cause you to get up and run out of the building. To all those that said they believed but did not get up and go out of the building, they would perish. That is what we call intellectual assent or devils' faith (James 2:19), a faith that is dead because it has no corresponding action (James 2:17, 20, 26).

We do not receive salvation by works but works are the test of whether our faith is real. James gives us several examples of this:

Read James 2:16. If a person has the means to help another but says, "Go your way, we will pray for you." The fact that he could have helped but did not indicates that he really did not care. His words were mere empty talk.

Read James 2:19. Devils' faith brings them no comfort, only fear. This shows that true saving faith is expressed by obedience and submission to God.

Read James 2:21-23. In Genesis 15:6 Abraham believed God to give him a seed from his own bowels in which all families of the earth would be blessed. As he believed, righteousness was imputed unto him without works (Rom. 4:9-11). Because Abraham believed in his heart, faith was expressed by a work of faith as God asked him to offer his son Isaac as an offering (Gen. 22).

Because of the faith in Abraham's heart (received in Gen. 15:6) this faith led to a work of faith or result of faith which was offering his son Isaac upon the altar. We read in James 2:22-23 (NIV), "You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete (or perfect) by what he did. And the scripture was FULFILLED that says, Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness."

So it is with Christian water baptism. The result of faith or work of faith that was always expressed when people believed on the Lord Jesus Christ was water baptism. This was practiced immediately upon conversion. So we could say that all those that believed and were baptized have fulfilled or completed by faith and action the scripture which says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ...Read Acts 16:30-34. Christian baptism understood correctly does not take away from justification by faith but actually strengthens the point. Faith is made perfect, complete or manifest by a work of faith which was usually water baptism in the early New Testament church. Read 1 Peter 3:20-21, the righteous man Noah (Gen. 7:1) became heir of the righteousness which is by faith as his faith was expressed in preparing the ark (Heb. 11:7). Baptism is the like figure or picture of this corresponding work of faith (1 Pet. 3:21). James says, "Shew me thy faith without thy works (which is impossible to do) and I will shew thee my faith by my works" (Jam. 2:18). God sees saving faith in the heart of a man before it expresses itself in action (Gen. 15:6). However, God will, through instruction show a man how to express his faith outwardly (Gen. 17:10-14; Rom. 4:10-11; Gen. 22; Jam. 2:22) thus bringing it to maturity and proving or making manifest the perfect will of God. Water baptism was a work of faith that the apostles demanded as a distinguishing factor between saving faith and intellectual assent.

On the day of Pentecost 3000 souls responded to the gospel and were baptized (Acts 2:41). If the twelve apostles baptized and it took 2 minutes a person to perform the act, that would mean that each apostle baptized eight and one-half hours that day. It was commonly known and understood by believers and unbelievers that all those that put saving faith in Jesus Christ as Lord, Messiah and Saviour would immediately be baptized.

When Jesus was baptized of John he gave the reason for this act as "to fulfill all righteousness" (Mt. 3:15). Jesus was already righteous, but through this act he fulfilled or completed the righteousness that he already had in his heart. Christian baptism is the outward act of the believer in which he fulfills or completes, the inward righteousness which he has in his heart through faith in Christ's atoning death and resurrection.

Many times as I've baptized I've had people say, "I'm not going to be baptized unless so and so can baptize me." Such attitudes make baptism invalid and for this reason the apostle Paul refrained from baptizing (1 Cor. 1:12-15). Read Gal. 3:27, baptism is done in the name of Jesus. There is no room here for anything less than Christ. Baptism is an identification with Christ not with man.

Through baptism the truth of the gospel message is acted out in the life of the believer, thus bringing before the church the central theme of Christ's atonement. Each time a believer is added to the church, they themselves act out in the ordinance of baptism their identification by faith with Christ - first in His death and burial unto sin, and second in his resurrection to newness of life (Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12).

Jesus gave a commission in Matthew 28:19 to baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. As we look at actual examples of baptism we see that the apostles and disciples baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. To baptize in the name of Jesus fulfills the commission of Matthew 28 because in Jesus Christ "dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9).

It is also true that the scriptures reveal that "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3:17). This means that when I go to work, when my wife is cooking dinner or whatever is done, do in the name of Jesus. This doesn't mean that every time I do something I have to stop and say "in Jesus' name I go to work, in Jesus' name I cook the dinner, etc." God is not so concerned about the words we say as He does the attitude of the heart. So it is with baptism. God is not so concerned with the words that the preacher said over those being baptized as He is with the obedience to the commission of Christ. So in other words the preacher may have said the words, "I baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" but the act was done in obedience to the person of Christ, therefore the person was baptized in the name of Jesus regardless of the actual words spoken over the individual.

It is also true that someone can say the words "in Jesus' Name" and actually not do the "deed in Jesus' Name." For example, If I were to teach a Bible study and I began to pray, "Father, in Jesus' Name I come before you and ask you to anoint this teaching because I have been paying my tithes, going to church every Sunday and Wednesday, I've given much money to the poor, so God bless this teaching, in Jesus' Name, Amen." Although I said, "in Jesus' Name" I did not pray in the name of Jesus. Why? Because I listed all of my righteousness as a means of God's blessing instead of trusting Christ righteousness as a means of God's blessing. I prayed IN MY NAME although I said, "in Jesus' Name."

This point is brought out because of the division that has come about in the body of Christ over the words the preacher used when baptizing converts.

I do believe that to be technicality correct as to the mode of Christian baptism that it was probably the name of the Lord Jesus Christ which was used. I say this because of the actual examples of baptism in the book of Acts (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5), but I would never tell someone to be re-baptized or that their baptism was invalid for the reasons that have already been stated. Baptism is an identification with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection, to re-baptize because of one's objection to not pronouncing the right words over the convert seems to take away from the central truth the He (Jesus) has offered one sacrifice for sins forever (Heb. 10:12).

What are the requirements of those desiring baptism?

(1) Instruction. A new convert needs to receive a certain amount of teaching to enable him to understand the nature and purpose of baptism. Read Matthew 28:19-20.

(2) Repentance. Repentance is a gift that God grants people who want to come to Him and be saved. It is a new attitude, a change of mind, a change of heart, that results in one turning from sin, to God and ultimately to His ways.

In Matthew 3:8 John the Baptist said, "Bring forth fruit that is consistent with repentance [let your lives prove your change of heart]." (Amplified Bible) And the apostle Paul said in his preaching to the Gentiles "that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance." (Acts 26:20; NASV) From these scriptures we can see that repentance is a change of heart, a change of mind and that good works are the fruit (evidence) of that changed heart.

(3) Faith. Faith is responding to something God has done. The gospel is responded to by faith in believing Christ died for our sins, was buried, and arose again that we might be declared righteous (1 Cor. 15:1-3; Rom. 4:25). This results in making Jesus the Lord of our lives and committing ourselves to Him as the only one that can save us (Rom. 10:9-10; Mt. 1:21; Mk. 16:15-16; Acts 8:36-37).

These requirements for baptism automatically rule out one class of persons - and that is infants. By its very nature an infant cannot be taught, cannot repent, and cannot believe. Therefore, an infant cannot be eligible for baptism if we are going to follow the scriptures.

There are only two reasons people are not baptized immediately when putting faith in Jesus Christ as Lord:

(1) Ignorance. The lack of proper instruction. This can be corrected in a matter of moments by going to the scriptures.

(2) Those being cut off. That is for example, someone in the hospital that has just put faith in Jesus as their Lord but dies without the opportunity to express that faith by water baptism. Read 1 Samuel 16:7.

The purpose of this teaching is to once again lay the foundation of the doctrine of Christ (Heb. 6:1-2), for a house cannot stand that does not have a proper foundation. Faith in Christ is that which justifies (Acts 15:8-9), but a faith that is unwilling to be expressed is dead faith (James 2:17). Only true living faith can make a true living Christian.

AN OPEN LETTER TO MY DAD

Dear Dad,

I will be looking forward to seeing you and Mom very soon. The babies should be here within a few weeks.

As I was riding the motorcycle on the way to my janitorial job, my mind kept going back to you and some of the things experienced in my childhood. You know, it always has been hard for us to talk on a father to son basis (which is probably not unusual for many families).

The reason that I'm writing this letter is because I want you to know the truth -- the truth about life, about Christianity, about things you knew to be wrong such as hypocrisy (pretending to be something that you weren't).

The disciples asked Jesus one time, "What would be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the world?" Jesus answered, "Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ (or I am of Christ); and shall deceive many." "And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many" (Mt. 24:3,13).

How do we know or how can we know truth from error? Well, the first thing is to take by faith that the scriptures are the very God-breathed words of God (2 Tim. 3:16). Today I am writing you a letter. I presume that you are not just reading one sentence from this letter and then telling Mom that such and such is what Don said in his letter. Much preaching today is like reading one sentence from a letter; frankly in doing that you can make the Bible say anything you want it to. The apostle Peter warned that many people would distort the scriptures to their own destruction (2 Pet. 3:15-17). This is where the word "heresy" is derived from. "Heresy" comes from a Latin word which means "to take or choose." Many people today are taking or choosing which part of the Bible they would like to believe. (The result is the many church denominations that we have today.)

Jesus said when He left this earth He would send the Spirit of truth to guide us into all truth (Jn. 16:13-14). The apostle John again speaks in the epistle of first John of men that would seduce, that is, try to lead a person astray. He says, "These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of ALL things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him. And now little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. If ye know that He is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him" (1 Jn. 2:26-29). Let me share with you what I see from these verses: (1) Men will try to lead you astray (knowingly or unknowingly). (2) The Spirit of truth will teach you. (3) The Spirit of truth's teaching that causes you to abide in Christ, will produce a fruit or character of life that will cause a person not to be ashamed when Christ comes. (5) Those that are truly born again are those whose faith in Christ's redemption and Word brings forth a fruit which is doing righteousness.

You see, 70 or 80 percent of Americans claim to be born again. But if that were true we would have a nation that practiced righteousness (and that is not the way it is). You see, the apostle Paul also made a statement against the religious Jews of his day that claimed to be the people of God by saying, "For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you" (Rom. 2:24). In other words these religious Jews were talking the talk but not walking the walk. They claimed the true God but conducted themselves in such a way that caused other people to think less of God. In other words, "If their God is real and they live like that, I don't want anything to do with their God." Well, Paul goes on to say, that the problem is not with God but with man's heart (Rom. 2:28-29).

Jesus was asked one time if there were few that would be saved? "And He said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able" (Lk. 13:23-24). For "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity" (Mt. 7:21-23).

You see, these people were religious enough and claimed many wonderful works but yet they were turned away from the kingdom. Why? Because they worked iniquity. You see, Jesus saves people not only from the penalty of sin but also from its power. Not to sin and continue a lifestyle of sin but FROM SIN. Is this sinless perfection? No. Is it a change of direction? Yes.

Jesus says, "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." "Wherefore by their fruits you shall know them" (Mt. 7:17-20; 3:10; Jn. 15; Lk. 13:7-9). You see, being born again is likened to an incorruptible seed (1 Pet. 1:23). And what kind of fruit does an incorruptible seed bring forth? What kind of fruit would a corrupt seed bring forth? Fruit after its own kind.

The apostle James speaks about the true religion and the pure religion when he says, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to KEEP HIMSELF UNSPOTTED FROM THE WORLD" (Jas. 1:27). Don't get me wrong, we are saved by faith in Christ alone. But we can tell what we believe by what we do. We are not saved by works but works are the test that reveals if our faith is real (Jas. 2:18). See Titus 1:16.

In our western civilization, to believe in Christ has come to mean no more than to acknowledge some facts about Him. Or to use natural terms I could say, "Do you believe that is a tree?" You said, "Yes, I believe that is a tree." "Do you believe Jesus died for your sins?" "Yes, I believe Jesus died for my sins." It is very possible that this kind of faith could be no more than demons faith (Jas. 2:19) or mental assent to some facts. In the Bible the words "believe" and "faith" mean much more. If I said, "Your house is on fire!" If you believed me that would produce an action which would be getting up and running out of the house. If you really believe that Christ's sacrifice (redemption) saves you from sin you're not going to be living in sin (Rom. 6). These things go together just as much as running out of the house that is on fire. Christ's redemption is not only that which saves a man from the penalty of sin, but it is also the great act of God whereby we have been enabled by God's Spirit (as He applies the truth of redemption to our hearts) to never go back into a lifestyle of in again. For those who continue a lifestyle of sin, the question is, "Do they really believe what they say they believe?" This is why the Bible says, "Examine and test and evaluate your own selves, to see whether you are holding to your faith and showing the proper fruits of it" (2 Cor. 13:5; AMP).

Don't get me wrong, its not that doing good things or deeds could ever deal with the problem of sin. For forgiveness comes only as a gift through the shedding of Jesus' blood. What good are good deeds in the light of redemption? They could never remove one of our sins. God through Jesus has paid on our behalf the wages of our sins which was eternal death (Rom. 6:23). "Who

was betrayed and put to death because of our misdeeds and was raised to secure our justification - our acquittal, and to make our account balance, absolving us from all guilt before God" (Rom. 4:25, AMP).

But is there not also a second meaning in the idea of God declaring man righteous through the redemption of Christ? Does not God make man upright (that is, giving him a new heart and change in his direction) as well as recognize him as upright? For example, I could never keep a pig away from a mud hole. Why? Because it is the nature of a pig to wallow in mud. But if I could somehow put the nature of a lamb into the pig then I wouldn't have to worry about the pig wallowing in the mud. It isn't the nature of a lamb to wallow in mud. So in Christ a new nature of Christ has been placed into the believer (Eph. 4:24). This explains the many scriptures that say, "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him" (1 Jn. 2:29). "And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 Jn. 3:3). "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. He that committeth (continues in) sin is of the devil" (1 Jn. 3:7-8). "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother" (1 Jn. 3:10). "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12-13). You work out that which God has worked in you. That is the fruit of your faith or as Hebrews 6:9-10 states, "Beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that ACCOMPANY salvation, though we thus speak. For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward His name." That which accompanies (to co-exist or occur with) salvation are the good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in (Eph. 2:10).

Yes it is possible for a person to have said the sinner's prayer, asked Jesus into their heart, without having really repented of their sins (repent: a change of mind, a change of heart that turns away from sin to God). These are people that Jesus said "draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me" (Mt. 15:8).

Yes, Jesus is after the hearts of men, they that have taken on the yoke of His kingdom (Mt. 11:28-30), they that will live by their King's (Christ's) commands (Lk. 6:46), they who have turned aside from sin unto Him (1 Cor. 6:9-10). God is calling you, I know because there's a special love in my heart to see you enter the kingdom and I pray to this end. Love, *Don*

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